

A WINDOW IN MOSCOW

A Traveller's War demonstrated that Alaric Jacob was among the front rank of correspondents reporting the war. His aim in this book is to report faithfully and accurately the Russian effort in the magnificent series of campaigns which brought our Soviet Allies to Berlin and beyond, and the prodigious task performed by millions of Russian men and women behind the lines. The author succeeds brilliantly as an interpreter of modern Russia. He has much to say about the Russian way of life, about Russian art, the theatre and the ballet, all of which have been maintained on a surprisingly high level through all the storms and stress of war. He deals with the apparent decline of Marxism, which has been superseded by patriotic flag-waving, the growth of new privileged classes of factory managers, army officers, etc., and the return of religion. These pictures are combined with the vivid reportage of the great campaigns of 1944-45, the relief of Leningrad, the liberation of the Crimea and of White Russia, the German rout of Lvov, the conquest of Rumania and Bulgaria, the surrender of Finland, the crossing of the Carpathians and the irresistible offensive on all fronts culminating in the triumph of May, 1945.

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A WINDOW IN MOSCOW

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By the Same Author :—

A TRAVELLER'S WAR
SEVENTEEN

A WINDOW IN MOSCOW

1944-1945

by
ALARIC JACOB



Collins

14 ST. JAMES'S PLACE LONDON

1946

●

To
CLIVE
who
while I was struggling to get
into Germany, spent five years
inside longing to get out

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I

ARCTIC CONVOY

"The quickest route from London to St. Petersburg is that followed by the Nord Express, starting from Charing Cross station. The train runs daily as far as Berlin (via Ostend, Brussels, Cologne and Hanover) and twice a week goes on to St. Petersburg, taking just under two days for the whole journey of 1745 miles (fare £14 1s. 8d.: ticket from Sleeping Car Co.)."

THIS WAS a comforting assurance, straight from the Baedeker of that plump year, 1913, but as the S.S. *Aert van der Neer*, her decks deep in coal dust and the grimy pulp of broken packing-cases, backed out of the dock into the Manchester Ship Canal, I sat on top of a tank that was packed by the forecastle and reflected that *this* was an odd way of travelling to Russia.

In 1913, Herr Baedeker continued, one could alternatively proceed by sea, making the passage in 28 days via Malta, Alexandria, the Piraeus, Salonica and Constantinople for a fare of 15 guineas, "including food." Well, this trip would probably take a full month to Archangel or Murmansk, whichever the Admiralty and the Commodore of the Convoy thought most advisable and might well take in on the way sundry ports in Scotland and Iceland. As to food, the purser had just told me we were provisioned for six months, "in case of accidents"—meaning being caught by the ice in North Russia—and that in view of this possibility, liquor would be rationed.

Tightening my muffler against the tart January air, I next considered what Herr Baedeker had to say about the Russian people.

"The Great Russians," said he, "whose speech and customs are spread over the whole Empire, are blond, blue-eyed, vigorous, with broad shoulders and bull-necks, often somewhat clumsy, with a strong tendency to obesity. . . ."

True, in the main, although in the four months I had spent in Moscow and on the Eastern Front in 1943, I met many people who would have liked to become fat but few whose food ration held out the smallest hope of ever being so.

"Their character," Herr Baedeker goes on, "has been influenced not only by a long subjugation to feudal despotism but also by the gloomy forests, the unresponsive soil, the rigorous climate and especially by the enforced inactivity of the long winters . . ."

True again, good doctor, the climate *is* beastly; it chastens the natures even of petted war correspondents who live in the Metropole Hotel and go to the ballet twice a week. But what is this that we find?

"In disposition the Russians are melancholy and reserved . . ."

(Good Heavens, then, by what error were we served with vodka at breakfast, last July at Orel, in General Gorbatoŭ's camp, after a couple of colonels and an equal number of war correspondents had disappeared under the table the night before?)

"They cling obstinately to their traditions and are full of self-sacrificing devotion to Czar, Church and feudal superior."

(This is glorious! Perhaps, in a dull moment in Switzerland, *Lenin* himself may have read those words).

"They are easily disciplined and so make excellent soldiers. . . . (Right. As Hitler now knows, they make the best soldiers in the world) . . . "but they have little power of independent thinking or initiation. . . . (Tell that to the guerillas in White Russia or the Stakhanovites who are doing their norm six times over in the Ural factories).

"The normal Great Russian is thus the mainstay of political and economic inertia and reaction.

(How unthinkingly does this Prussian thrust the cap that fits his own head over his neighbour's ears!)

"Even the educated Russian gives comparatively little response to the actual demands of life; he is more or less the victim of fancy and temperament which sometimes lead him to a despondent slackness, sometimes to emotional outbursts. Here we have the explanation of that want of organisation, the disorder

and waste of time which strike the Western visitor to Russia. This pessimistic outlook finds expression in the word that is for ever on Russian lips—'Nitchivo' (it doesn't matter): the Russian derives his faults as well as his virtues from his 'wide nature' (Shirokaya Natura)."

One can have a lot of fun at poor old Baedeker's expense, but perhaps that is enough. On this January day, 1944, I am ending two months' leave in England and, among the many sound opinions I have heard about Russia, it would be easy to pick out many of another kidney—opinions no less ridiculous than these which were published 31 years ago. Human nature *does* change, and not only in Socialist countries; the British soldier of this war is a radically different type from the moustached, slouching, often unwashed and unlettered soldier of 1914. But despite the hundreds of books that have been written about Socialist Russia, the enormous change which Marxism and industrialisation have wrought in the Russian character are still not appreciated by many people who go on looking at Russia through 1913 Baedeker spectacles. And that is another way of furnishing an excuse for the production of this book. Very few foreigners have had the privilege of living in the Soviet Union during this war; the normal spate of books on Russia has dried up because the people who used to write them have not been in Russia since June, 1941. And so the handful of war correspondents who have seen a little of the war there (no foreigner has seen more than a very little of the whole vast scene) can, I think, be excused for adding yet another title or two to the once-swelling spate, first because we need any data which will help us to learn how to live in the closest amity with Russia for at least twenty years (such is the pledge in our treaty) and second because these correspondents are necessarily in possession of a great deal of information which can never find its way into our small, wartime newspapers.

But as the black wharves of Manchester paled into the greyneess of that January day I could not find immediate enthusiasm for the task ahead. I climbed down the iron ladder into the 'tween-deck where our cabin was and found my wife kneeling on the sooty floor, unpacking books for the voyage. They were few in number, but to me they spoke in accents plain. Oh that I might have a long shelf of such books, beside a bright fire! Oh that they might collect dust, and I with them, settled in one place! From 1934 until 1939,

a foreign correspondent in New York and Washington; in 1940 a war reporter in France; in 1941 on the same errand to Egypt, by way of Brazil and South Africa; and from that moment until my leave in November and December, 1943, successively in the Western Desert, Tobruk, in Syria, Iraq, Persia, India and Burma, then back to Persia and into the U.S.S.R., finally home by way of Egypt, the Sudan, Uganda and the Congo, West Africa and Portugal. It had been "fun" the last two years especially: few people had so "good a war" as I. Most of my friends had indeed endured not only a tougher time but, what was worse, a more boring one. But if this kind of life has a coarsening effect in the end, as I believe it does, is it not partly because that shelf of books is always so far away? Because, for lack of its stabilising influence, one lets the cable and the magazine usurp its place; lives only in the moment and tells one's confidences to the telephone?

Man was not meant to be permanently peripatetic. I did not feel myself cast for the rôle of the Wandering Jew—disqualified as I am by race and by the possession of a sedentary temperament—but I have learned to sympathise sharply with all wandering folk, knowing the demoralisation which proceeds from living in a suitcase. A Room of One's Own is not enough—no matter how good the hotel, and even if a fireside can, at times, be improvised. The forty pounds weight an aircraft permits you is no hardship in itself: it is good to travel light, when clothes and creature comforts can be made up on your way. But there is never any substitute for the Bookshelf of one's own.

However, I had no right to grumble, for I was going back to Russia where, at heart, I wanted to be. And this time I would not be alone. My wife was coming with me—she to work for the *Observer* and the *Yorkshire Post* while I represented the *Daily Express*. It had been a whirlwind thing to arrange. Three days before I was due to sail, she had not received her Soviet visa and, still more important, her exit permit from the British Isles—for lack of which she could get no emergency coupons and therefore buy no clothes. But with just 70 hours to go till train-time, the visa arrived and from that moment I heard nothing of her, except for one or two anguished phone calls, until she staggered out of a taxi loaded down with a fur-coat and cap, high boots and the thickest underwear war-time London could provide and a cautious Board of Trade certify for sale.

So here we were on an 8000 tonner, loaded down with tanks and

ammunition, and the filthiest ship withal I was ever on. She had just been made over to the Dutch government by the Ministry of War Transport and a sore disappointment she was to her Dutch crew, who would have liked to be polite about an English ship but could not in conscience be so; nor could they succeed in cleansing her, try as they might, with the result that she arrived in Russia almost as dirty as when she set out, probably the foulest ship that ever sailed under the Orange flag.

We were off to join the convoy on our own and the four passengers we carried were the only ones on any of the 30 ships. There was just my wife Iris, Comrade Valentine Prigornaya, wife of a secretary at the Soviet Embassy in London, the Hon. Mrs. Stewart-Mackenzie, who was going out to be third secretary of our embassy in Moscow on the commercial side, and myself. There was a lean Dutch captain with one of those lean, dark faces the Spaniards left behind them in the Netherlands, a rubicund first officer and three British radio operators besides the Dutch crew and the ack-ack gunners from the Maritime Regiment.

Both Laetitia Stewart-Mackenzie and Comrade Prigornaya combined good looks with erudition, and my wife is not backward in either respect so that I fancy few men have been so advantageously placed at the start of an Arctic convoy. The comrade, who had married at sixteen, was a champion swimmer of Moscow and had made good use of her hobby when on the way to England earlier in the war, her ship was torpedoed off Scapa Flow and she had had to spend 16 hours in the icy water. When we asked her what her other hobbies were, she replied demurely: "Parachuting." She was an excellent type of what the Russians call "a Soviet woman," as distinguished from less admirable, left-over breeds which still persist in the U.S.S.R. Very interested in pretty clothes, she was at the same time as hard as nails and quite unspoilt by the comparative luxury of diplomatic life in war-time London.

Our quarters consisted of temporary cabins that had been partitioned off from the hold and heated by iron stoves which were of little use because their chimneys debouched on the deck above, which was deep in water as soon as we got to sea. However, they were cosy enough during the two days in which we slid greasily down the canal, past smoking chimneys, sad backyards and those dreary little one-man shops of which my employer, Lord Beaverbrook, is so fond—standing begrimed on the street-corner, covered in advertisements for washing-soap and laxatives.

The first night we tied up at Runcorn, one place I had never expected to visit. The canal pilot took us to a pub run by his brother-in-law where we had the last English beer any of us expected to taste for years and were treated with an eye-winking deference that seemed to say: "Of course, we are discretion itself, but we know perfectly well where you are going."

The little town was so ugly that I had no difficulty in persuading Iris, who was a bit apprehensive about what North Russia was going to be like, that at least one could be sure it could not look worse than Runcorn. A woeful mongrel dog followed us through the moonlit streets and trotted up the gangway after us. Next morning it was still aboard. Every one called it "Runcorn" and it continued with the ship all the way to Molotovsk where, for all I know, it may still be, for it did the same trick in reverse when the ship touched Soviet soil, running down the gangplank and disappearing into the snowy wastes. I like to think of Runcorn mating perhaps with a timber wolf and introducing a strain of Cheshire decorum into that unpredictable breed. Runcorn soon became popular with every one except the first officer, who, harassed by too many pets already, observed: "Anodder of dese dogs indeed—everywhere zay go, und everywhere is zere ein Mess behind to clean!"

On January 7th we sailed past Liverpool and out into the Mersey. We were soon rolling heavily in the Irish Sea. That night water poured down the funnel of our stove and flooded the cabin, so that we had to put on our boots in bed before setting foot to floor. It was nice to think that a wise government was charging us very little for this accommodation because the captain warned us that when it got really rough we would be wise to sleep in the saloon upstairs, as with water along the deck it would not be safe for landsmen to make the journey up and down in the darkness.

Next day we were in smoother water sailing past Skye and the Hebrides. The bar opened for a couple of hours in the evening and we had our first rations of whisky which, coupled with the grand scenery we had been gazing at all day, sent us to bed in smooth humour and when we awoke next morning the ship was anchored in the midst of a fleet of merchantmen, amid the dark green waters, the bluish rocks and the encircling mountains of Loch Ewe.

There we spent four days. A soft rain fell most of the time and Laetitia, whose native heath was not far away across the hills,

stood on the bridge and pointed out this fell and that corrie and explained how a crofter might wring a living out of those tiny strips of cultivation. I was then in the Noble Savage mood which is apt to fall upon me every time I leave England (looking back from the ship at some pitiful cottage and scraggy garden, I speculate upon just how few pounds a year it would be possible to live in such a place) and I listened enthralled while she told me of crofts that could be had for six pounds a year. She had several herself for which she could not find tenants, so perhaps we could meet half-way about the rent? The conversation was conducted in those businesslike tones which one reserves for all thoroughly unreal and imaginative enterprises.

On the second day we tried to get ashore to stretch our legs and in so doing encountered the only unpleasant Naval Type I have ever met with. There was little that was Navy about the young man wearing one stripe of the Wavy Navy who coldly informed us: "Nobody, I repeat *nobody*, is allowed ashore at Loch Ewe: you must realise that this is a very *secret* place." We detailed to him several Secret Things which it was impossible not to see from the ship. With difficulty I restrained the contention that as the secret of the Battle of Alamein had been confided to me ten days before it occurred, I could surely be entrusted with the secrets of this remote and uninteresting anchorage. But the young man was adamant. I got the impression he had never been to sea. He had certainly never absorbed anything from that school of manners which is a Naval Mess for when we asked him to take ashore a letter addressed to the naval officer in charge, he declined to do so.

We paced the narrow decks, barging into tanks and crated guns at every turn, in a vain effort to stave off by exercise the violent bilious attack which we felt creeping up on us after a week of Dutch meals washed down by drams of black coffee. While the rain misted the porthole I sat down in the cabin, splenetically banging on my typewriter. Going on his inspection tour, the captain inserted his profile—a Cyrano de Bergerac, Spanish style—through the door and observed: "Like most journalists, you aspire to write the Book, no?"

"The trouble is," I replied, "that like so many to-day, my aspiration is coming true. Thirty thousand words to go—and all to be done before I get off your ship."

"You should have the Water-Proof Bag," he suggested darkly. "To lose All would be a pity."

And with this comforting thought he withdrew his nose and left me to my labours.

The signal to Abandon Ship was given in mock solemnity after lunch. In a storm of driving sleet we climbed down a rope ladder into the boat, wearing our fur coats and the life-jacket, with its attached whistle and red light to attract attention in the water, over them. Thanks to the fact that she left her high-heels behind, Iris managed the rope ladder very well. The first mate, who was in charge of our boat, slipped down a rope, the last man in, and the lines were thrown off and the boat drifted clear. How vast appeared the sides of the ship once we were free of her! Even in the loch a swell was running and we were soon taking quite a bit of water. It was a remarkably lifelike rehearsal for the real thing. But not a reassuring one. Half the oarsmen were English, half Dutch, so the orders had to be given in both languages. What with the passengers and all the ack-ack gunners, each boat was badly overcrowded: some of the lads barely knew how to row. They floundered about with the heavy oars; against wind and tide we made scarcely any headway. Not that that would have mattered much in a real torpedoing, I suppose. Few that I spoke to expected that we would be able to make much use of the boats; every man, especially those who had been torpedoed before, put more reliance on his life-jacket and tiny glow of his electric light.

That evening, one by one, the ships raised anchor and, swinging round on the swiftly running tide, made for the open sea, forming up in convoy stations outside the loch. Most of the vessels were American but all the escorts were British. It was gloriously warm in the Gulf Stream. As Scotland faded away we seemed to be sailing into a summer evening, leaving the sleet and the snow-covered hills behind, and it seemed almost a desecration of the serene spirit of that evening that all the guns should be manned and that presently the Oerlikons should be scaring the following gulls away with their shrill practice shooting.

But next day the wind freshened; the sea lost its summery glaze and took on a hard, angry green. The ship began to roll. The fiddles were on the tables and at night, even in our narrow bunks, it was hard to sleep because of the rolling.

January 14.—Not very far from Iceland. A gale is blowing—nine points on the Beaufort scale. The American ahead of us loses a lifeboat and there is more damage on other ships so in the afternoon the whole convoy heaves-to and we remain hove-to all night.

I wouldn't care to be on some of the American ships which have several locomotives on their decks: the engines are blotted out by the big seas. You can see how the overladen liberty ships shiver and shatter after every wallow.

The captain, telling us not to try to get below across the open deck, gives us his sleeping-cabin high in the reeling deck-house. A double-bed! But Iris and I no sooner marvel at this luxury than we begin to realise that four foot six of tight-sprung mattress is not the best foundation for a night such as this. The cabin seems to be swinging through an arc of some 80 degrees. We roll uncontrollably from side to side and by morning are both in a foul temper. At breakfast we find everyone else in the same condition; there is a definite strain on the muscles due to continually tensing the body against the movement of the ship and this in turn sours the disposition.

January 15.—Still hove-to in the gale. About noon the wind changes, the sky turns first red, then a highly improbable purple; a hazy aureole appears deep in the scurrying banks of cloud—the sun trying to break through. We seem to have come unstuck from the rest of the convoy; one or two stray ships, whom we scarcely recognise, loom up now and then but we have definitely lost the Commodore and six ships out of 20—these have not been in touch all day. In the evening the gale drops. A strange calm succeeds—the air warm and the sea heaving in a long swell. The Commodore's ship steams close again. What a pleasure, this smoothness, after two days of gale. Our cabins are wet, but it's good to sleep again below.

January 16.—Wakened by the birth of another gale. This one much worse—12 points, the maximum on the Beaufort scale. In other words, a hurricane—the first I ever was in and I would be glad if it were the last. . . .

We had a raft carried over the side and one of the lifeboats was holed. Some of the deck cargo broke loose and had to be allowed to go overboard. This was one of those "depressions moving south from Iceland" which one remembered from the pre-war weather forecasts, and it grew out of a warm, treacherous calm. At first it was just grey pavements of water that came slapping against us but within an hour it was as though whole roadways were turning over upon themselves and falling upon us. The convoy dispersed. It was not ordered to do so; it just blew apart. The tumbling walls of water cut down our vision to no more than 100 yards and the

boiling scum that blew off the tops of the waves filled the air with moisture as though sleet were falling. The noise of the wind was like the high-pitched hooter of an electric train which went screeching on, hour after hour. The passengers clambered on to the bridge where they found all the ship's officers on duty. Iris told me later that she was more frightened by the sight of these seas than by the enemy attacks which came later, and indeed we were probably in greater danger that day than when the U-boats appeared; but being less imaginative and knowing little of ships, I had the unreasoning optimism to believe that mere water would not destroy us although when in mid-afternoon the engines stopped and we lay wallowing at the mercy of every wave, without steerage-way, often sideways on to the seas, it became plain that something was seriously amiss.

The chief engineer, looking older and whiter than he had seemed before, ran back and forth from the bridge. There was a defect in the shaft which, if not dealt with at once, might have caused a complete breakdown; so for two hours we had to lie at the mercy of the gale while the engineers tried to repair it. It was just 3 p.m. when I saw the captain's face twitch and his hand clutch the rail. He said nothing, but next morning, when it was all over, he told us that was the moment when he wondered whether his ship could possibly survive the vast wall of water which crashed from what looked like the height of a city building upon his forward hatches.

"I didn't think she could take that one," he said, "but you see, although she *is* dirty she is at bottom a good ship."

(Shipwrights who built these "Empire" class boats in Sunderland, please take this unsolicited testimonial from someone whose opinion you will know how to value.)

Late in the afternoon we got under way again. The noise of the engines reviving was a delight after the painful creaking of the halted ship amid the caterwauling of the gale. The engines stopped again that night after we were in bed. The sudden silence and the violent motion told us what had happened. But after 12 hours the storm blew itself out.

January 17.—Wake to a smooth sea and an effortless breakfast. One other merchantman and a corvette are with us. What it must have been like yesterday in a corvette I can scarcely imagine. . . . The sun rises at noon over a sea that is blue and warm. A line of snowy jagged mountains appears, their summits turned into caps

of gold by the sun—sharp white teeth with glistening dental work on each, that's what the mountains of Iceland look like. They arise clean and sharp from the sea like the sides of icebergs. You can imagine a vast projection of ice continuing under the waves. There is not a speck of green to be seen and the sides appear to be sheer, without indentations, although somewhere over there, they say, is the entrance to Seydisfjord. We come close and lie a few miles off Seydisfjord in the afternoon, five other ships from the convoy around us now, and eight British destroyers and two corvettes come out from what, with glasses, appears to be a tiny crack in the wall of rock—the entrance to the fjord, up which is a sizable anchorage and settlement. We hope to get in there before dark but are told to proceed independently to Akureyri, a port on the north coast.

January 18.—We touched the Arctic Circle rounding the north-eastern tip of Iceland during the night. The air is suspiciously warm, the sea oily; the glass is falling fast and we know another tremendous storm is on the way, but we are making our top speed of almost 11 knots and hope to get into the fjord before the Furies fall on us again. We sail head on towards a solid wall of snowy rock. Then the rock seems to part, disclosing an island with a few wooden shacks on it and a narrow channel between. This is the fjord. Behind us the wind is beginning to howl, the sky is black, but ahead the evening sun is palely shining and the water is smooth as black looking-glass. To come into harbour like this is to understand what bliss the sight of land can be to the sailor, to understand why the sailor toys with the dream of settling down in a shack by the water's edge—to enjoy the drama of the elements without being caught up in them. The light fades early but on shore the headlights of cars shine along the roads and the town of Akureyri is lit up like a toy village—a church, shop-windows glowing, neon signs flashing over a chemist's and a department store. It might be any township in Jutland or Norway and the women passengers are longing to set foot in this fairyland, test whether those shops are real and whether they actually contain scarves or silk stockings. The cruiser *Kent* is in the fjord and we write a letter to her commander, asking leave to go ashore. An amiable engineer-commander from the *Kent* who has come to look at our damaged shaft takes it to his admiral.

January 19.—A spotless naval launch comes alongside with a letter from the admiral inviting the passengers to go ashore in it

and to dine with him in the *Kent* that evening. This is the advantage of travelling with three personable women! I recommend the practice to fellow war correspondents for the future; the technique is to remain quietly in the background while your charming companions tow you in their wake to drinks with destroyer captains, dinner with admirals and luncheon with commodores.

Akureyri is the most agreeable surprise. It is beautifully clean and the shops are full of American goods. We go into the Gulfoss Hotel for a cup of coffee where my Scandinavian appearance stands me in good stead for the waitress addresses me in Norwegian and lends me money to pay her bill until we can get Icelandic currency for ourselves. The place is full of American soldiers. A very homesick one attaches himself to us, complaining that the Icelandic girls won't go out with Americans and that he is very lonely. Outside in the street, our civilian appearance, wrapped in fur coats, evidently suggests our destination for another Doughboy comes up and addresses me in Russian: "Congratulations, Tovarich," he says, "how splendidly the Red Army is doing!" He is disappointed to find I am only an Englishman for he has spent some months in Hampshire where he found the beer not to his taste and the girls (as in Iceland?) not co-operative.

The bookshops of Akureyri are first-rate. There are plenty of British and American authors translated into Icelandic and there are actually two publishing houses in the town, which cannot have more than four thousand people. There are also two newspapers; quantities of silk stockings, American cigarettes and cigars and chewing-gum and sweaters of the Fair Isle type, made on the spot. The Royal Navy is here in its thousands, buying presents for the girls at home. Laetitia possessing the useful diplomatic privilege of being able to borrow money from any British consul anywhere, we repair to the home of Mr. Gook, outside which a large tin Lion and Unicorn stands guard, and ask him for the loan of £50. Waking from sleep in his front-parlour, Mr. Gook says, "What are you, an E.N.S.A. company?" but when Laetitia flashes her Foreign Office document he produces the money most amiably and would like to tell us all about the early days of the war in Iceland. Shivering on the doorstep, the women gaze longingly towards the shops while I engage Mr. Gook's attention. In 1939, it seems, a descent of the German Fleet on Iceland was daily anticipated. It was thought they would intercept the Icelandic fishing fleet in the open sea, put German sailors aboard the fishing boats and then sail into harbour

undetected, pouring ashore to occupy the keypoints which were virtually unprotected. Iceland's population of about 130,000 would have been quite helpless to deal with such a situation. Mr. Gook communicated his fears to Whitehall who, as might be expected at that time, told him to "do the best he could" as there were no men or ships to be spared for any preventive measures. Accordingly Mr. Gook organised a sort of unofficial coast-guard and a system of intelligence among the fishermen in the hope that if a German force appeared off the coast he might be able to warn the Icelandic police to stand by, at least. At that time the Icelanders were apparently indifferent to the war issues and might not even have put up a token resistance to a German landing.

"Imagine if the Germans had seized Iceland when they got Norway and Denmark! what *would* have happened to our convoys in the North Atlantic!" said Mr. Gook with justifiable emotion. "We would have been in the most desperate position."

But fortunately the Germans did not strike and the British and Americans, acting slowly, nevertheless got to Iceland before it was too late. With the result that Iceland is now geared to the American economy. In return for goods and services supplied to American troops, the island receives quantities of American goods which they sell mostly to British sailors at handsome profits.

They hated the occupation at first and some bloody incidents occurred between the civilians and the Allied troops. But the war has stayed away from Iceland and the occupation has brought a roaring prosperity such as has never been known in her history. Brand-new American cars drive over the rocky roads; beautiful American radios and gramophones discourse jazz in wooden homes which echoed only to the wheezing of the harmonium before. But what is going to happen when the war ends and the foreign sailors buy their presents in London instead of Akureyri is not quite clear. Iceland is stocked with consumer goods, every girl has smart clothes, an Icelandic novel costs 15 shillings (and plenty are bought), the tiny nation maintains a minister in Moscow as well as London and Washington but the basis of all this is not the cod or the home-produced tweed but the sale of knick-knacks to visiting firemen who, one day, will sail away and visit no more. So it seems that Iceland will need a bit of post-war planning too, along with less fortunate states.

Laden with parcels, the women returned to the *Aert van der Neer* to change for dinner. The bath-tub received its wheezing

charge of warm salt-water and promptly at 7.45, before an audience of grinning sailors and gunners, the exquisite creatures tiptoed in their high heels over the grimy sides of the ship, down the rope-ladder and into the admiral's barge. Admiral Palliser's quarters in the *Kent* were warm and white and gold and to enter them was like stepping out of a coal-barge on the Thames Embankment and walking into a private suite in the Savoy Hotel. Captain Hawkins of the *Kent* was there and Captain Robson of the destroyer *Hardy*, who had just got in after rounding up laggards in the storm and tied up alongside the cruiser. There had been rumours that six ships were missing, four of them feared foundered, but these were evidently exaggerated. One ship had to turn back damaged to Loch Ewe and four more, missing after the storm, had also gone back for repairs.

After the sullen madness of the sea it was as merry as a Christmas party around that glowing table, with the port circulating and the pink-faced admiral, puffing on his cigar, reminiscing comfortably about the discomfort we'd been through.

"Weather is our worst enemy just now," he said. "Let's face it, in normal times no sensible seaman would sail around northern Norway in January and February—the weather is unbelievably bad. You've seen a force twelve gale; one may go to sea for years and not see such a storm. Once seen, never forgotten. Gales interfere with the enemy as much as with ourselves, of course, and sometimes they do aid us in getting a convoy through."

I said that the stock joke among the seamen on our ship was "Is this Journey *Really* Necessary?" and asked, was there no possible alternative? Could not convoys go through the Mediterranean to Beirut or Haifa, thence by truck across Irak to link up with the Russians at Tabriz in Persia? No, the admiral replied, this journey is really necessary still for there is no substitute on land for 20 to 30 ships, which can carry an enormous amount of stuff, much of it too heavy to go by road. So long as Russia wants heavy machinery and industrial equipment he added, the convoys have to go through.

I hear an American war correspondent who is aboard the *Kent* has been making anxious inquiries about me, thinking perhaps that I might "scoop" him by dispatching a story from Russia. (Neither of us need have worried. We both wrote about the convoy but the Admiralty held the stories up for 3½ months.)

January 21.—Spent another day ashore yesterday having lunch

aboard *Hardy* with the captain, and returned with the darkness to our own ship, sated with pleasures, like children going back to school after the holidays. At noon to-day we sailed—15 left in the convoy and eight destroyers with us. There are two cruisers shadowing us but these we shall never see. It was on the last Arctic convoy that the *Scharnhorst* was sunk.

"We must expect that the Germans will try to avenge her," were the admiral's last words.

January 22.—Sailing north-east at about 10½ knots. It snowed all night and this morning the decks are frozen thick. Even the inner wall of our cabin is plated in ice. But this cold, being dry, is not really hard to bear.

With injunctions to secrecy, we are told our destination. It is not Murmansk or Archangel, but Molotovsk, a new port on the White Sea. Teasing the captain, we say, "Shhsh! not Molotovsk. The code word is Scriabinsk."

But he does not know that Comrade Molotov, a relative of the Russian composer, is really Mr. Scriabin, so this must seem to him an English joke, worth only a lifted eyebrow.

It's curious to see the tanker next to us giving suck to one of the destroyers, which steams up behind her and takes in oil fuel through a long pipe for over an hour. And all the while we are spanking along at our maximum speed.

January 24.—Yesterday and to-day it was dead calm but still very cold, with snow a foot deep and frozen hard on the decks. But in the evening we enter the Gulf Stream again. At once you detect the warm air playing about you, like the hairdresser's electrical drier on the back of your neck. And in an hour or two the snow has all melted and the scuppers are running with a spring flood of icy water which takes quite a while to purl over the side.

January 25.—Very warm in the Gulf Stream to-day. Walk on the deck before breakfast without coat or gloves.

It is still dark when I start working down in the cabin about 10 a.m. so I have to keep the shade over the port to preserve the "black-out." Somehow, I am not smiting the typewriter with my usual vigour this morning. We are now directly off North Cape and I keep thinking of the *Scharnhorst* and of how this convoy, too, must be prepared to pay the price we let our seamen in for in 1940 by failing to hold Norway; for no amount of ingenuity will ever prevent U-boats based in those fjords in northern Norway from striking at the ships which pass so close to their havens.

It is just 11 a.m., and getting light enough for me to turn off the electricity and open the port, when there comes a gurgitating explosion that jars the whole ship. The idea of being down there when submarines are about becomes very unattractive, all of a sudden, so I come up on deck, thinking as I do so of the men in the engine-room whose jobs keep them down there until the ship is actually struck. But for one who has never heard a depth-charge before there is nothing to choose between it and the noise of a torpedo. (It was not till much later that day that I learned to distinguish between the two.) In the saloon I find a discussion going on between the radio operators as to whether we have a Jonah on the ship; someone, they think, must have a green blanket with them (a new nautical superstition to me). And who should come in at that moment but Laetitia, anxious as I was to discover who is depth-charging who, carrying a Shetland blanket on her arm, which shades from a bluish colour into a delicate green. We *thought* as much, say the radio operators with one voice; for a moment I wonder if they are going to throw the fetish overboard, but they just shrug their shoulders fatalistically, as though it were too late now to do anything about it. And the depth-charging goes on through the morning—now close at hand, now farther away, while our destroyers steam around in wide circles.

While this underwater bombardment is going on the steward comes in and asks, have we no steamship tickets? He is preparing the papers for disembarkation at Molotovsk. I feel he is perhaps tempting Fate by his optimism but that it might be indelicate to say so. But the steward is definitely upset and keeps mumbling, "Most irregular, passengers with no tickets . . . what am I to say to the Russian authorities?" while the submarine crumps go on and running through them, like a frivolous commentary in a solemn documentary film, is the motif of Strauss waltzes played by the band in the palm court of some Safe Hotel, coming to us over the captain's radio. After a while all four of us drift up on to the bridge, feeling that there we shall be at the mainspring of this whole puzzling business. But it is not so; on the bridge they know little more than on the fo'c'sle. It seems that a submarine pack is out after us, but how many there are and whether any have been sunk, nobody knows. We listen in for a while to the destroyers and corvettes talking to each other over the radio, but as we don't know the code, very properly we cannot fathom what is going on.

Every time a depth charge goes down, Runcorn barks vain-

gloriously, as though shoosing some local pooch away—all on his own lung-power too. And as they go down at irregular intervals all day long, Runcorn is pretty hoarse by nightfall. Then comes a lull. The weather is little colder than southern England and the sky is clear—far too clear. At the beginning, I had expected Arctic twilight if not darkness most of the time, but with the Northern Lights covering great arcs of the Heavens with their own Milky Way, the ships stand out on the horizon like silhouettes.

"A picnic for the Subs," sniffs a London gunner. "Shan't be sorry when this party's over. They don't usually send us this way more than once, thank Cripes."

Resting his neck crowned with its Balaclava helmet on the barrel of his gun, he tells me how they are trained for weeks for this job, with the probability that they will never have a chance to fire a round after mounting guard for a month. Yet these Russia-bound ships carry as many gunners aboard as they carried a whole crew in peace-time.

As we were sitting down to supper at 8 p.m. the U-boat pack closed in to attack. Charges went down more often than ever—gurgling, bubbling explosions that shook us to the keel interrupted our conversation. We counted them going down, and the pause between each. At 8.45 there was a blast less aqueous, more staccato than those that had gone before. This was the first torpedoing. The captain left the table, exclaiming drily, "Somebody's gone."

It was the American ship on our starboard bow. We went out on deck but in the soft blurring of these northern night-lights nothing clear could be seen. Quite slowly she fell out of line. The sea was calm. Rockets went up as her boats were put down. In a flash two of the lifeboats drifted past us. We looked down at them with voiceless sympathy and proceeded at full speed. We could not, of course, stop. It was amazing to me to experience how modestly, undramatically, a ship could be struck and disappear into the darkness and the sea. In my innocence I had expected explosions, flashes of light. But nothing like this happened. Just the steady dropping of charges at intervals, hour after hour. We began to fear our escorts would run out of explosives. . . . After dinner we sat in the tiny saloon, trying to play draughts, the three women and myself. Often we forgot even to huff each other.

"Your move, isn't it?" And boom . . . crash . . . gurgle . . . wallop would rage the tornado of explosives outside.

"Oh, I say, I could have taken three of yours last time . . ."

"Isn't there some game that doesn't require any concentration?"

We settle down to sleep in the saloon, no one having any stomach for the 'tween deck on a night like this. After midnight two more ships go, one of them the commodore's ship, an Englishman. But we are so tired after over twelve hours of continuous pursuit and counter-attack that we sleep sound on the saloon sofas and the third ship goes down without any of us being the wiser. So thick is the protective gloss which the Will to Survive throws over one!

January 26.—At dawn we take the tally: three ships lost out of 15, one destroyer damaged, but all the other warships sound. No air attacks as yet but we stand by for these as it grows light. Soon a couple of German planes appear and circle far out around the convoy. The destroyers shoot idly at them but they stay out of range.

I am a good deal more frightened by the prospect of being bombed than I was last night by the torpedoes because I was bombed in a destroyer once, coming out of Tobruk, and the sense of being personally a target, alone on the expanse of water, was more overpowering than in any London blitz or desert shelling.

My wife didn't mind the U-boats as much as she did the storm: she told me she had difficulty in *imagining* that we would be torpedoed so that no unpleasant images arose to plague her, but those falling walls of water were so actual that they were truly frightening. She is a novelist by profession, so it is strange that imagination did not do its worst for her. It certainly did for me. But although I kept picturing myself in the sea, it was always as one who managed to keep afloat and alive.

Air alerts lasted most of the day but no more aircraft appeared. A light snow fell, giving the convoy the mercy of a little protection.

January 27.—After a beautiful and early dawn, the first Soviet aircraft appear; they look like Stormoviks. Then come a flotilla of Russian destroyers and corvettes; most of the destroyers are of the type built in Italy for the Red Fleet before the war, but the corvettes are new to me—strange, box-like affairs, fast but clumsy-looking. They turn out to be American, given to the Russians under Lease-Lend. A good deal of flag-wagging and lamp-flashing goes on between the Russians and our own ships. At four p.m. the convoy breaks up, all the British warships going with a few merchantmen into Murmansk while the rest of us go on our way

with 8 Russian warships escorting. The Russians form us up in different line of convoy.

January 28.—Still warm last night but this morning it is freezing again and for the first time I need Henry Irving, my museum-piece fur-coat with its musquash lining and enormous collar. I think it was the last second-hand gent.'s fur-coat left in London and it has a curious history, having been made in Edinburgh to the order of some commercial gent who was going to Russia before the last war. Apparently he died and the coat reverted to a London outfitters' who seem to have been letting it out for theatrical uses from 1913 until Christmastide, 1943, when it fell to me for some £18 (at a time when you could not get a fur-coat in England for less than £100). It gave me a seedy, Shaftesbury Avenue air—its Irish furze exterior was indestructible even if its interior had degenerated into a moth factory.

We are in the White Sea, off the Kola Peninsula, and the decks are freezing solid again.

January 29.—In the afternoon we creep up to Molotovsk with a Russian pilot on board. The port was built in the last few years, largely with convict labour, and it is the crudest-looking thing you ever saw, but like other raw contrivances in Russia, it works.

The low, frozen coast edged closer as the convoy went in one by one. Children were playing with a sledge as in a landscape by Breughel and by a cluster of unpainted wooden shacks a team of reindeer were standing, hitched to a sleigh with American packing-cases on it. I was disappointed to see how tiny the deer were: scarcely muscular enough, you would think, to draw an average-sized Santa Claus. The crew were pretty excited to be here at last. But they are going to be terribly disappointed before they are through. Out of all this vast country, to see only Molotovsk is equivalent to a Russian, who knows his London from Dickens, being put ashore at John o' Groats then told, "This is the classic island of Great Britain."

Getting into the port is a hit-and-miss affair. There is no tug. Ahead one can see a green light with a red light directly over it. On approaching closer, you note that the two lights are really a long distance apart but that so long as a pilot focuses them one atop the other, and steers in that direction, he will stay in the centre of the channel. A fierce tide is running inside the break-water. The quays are just wooden barriers erected against the barren shore. Our pilot takes us head-on towards the quay appar-

ently with the intention that the tide will turn us round the right way, but the tide is not running right so that our captain, purple in the face, at last shouts that he can stand the risk no longer . . . we are going to hit the shore . . . and he begs the pilot to order Full Speed Astern which the pilot, with a melancholy shake of his head, eventually does. We have to back half-out and repeat the process over again. The docking takes about two hours in all. Darkness falls and we are wondering if we shall be allowed ashore that night when a very tall and cheerful British naval officer in a white sheepskin hat comes over the side and says, "Four passengers! Oh, God, I've only got one jeep!"

Valentine has brought some huge wooden crates back from England: what we need is a three-ton lorry. But the young officer says he will do his best to get us ashore by stages. Laetitia, in the rôle of diplomat, goes first; then the baggage; then, at midnight, Valentine, my wife and myself.

A plump naval officer comes to fetch us in a fresh Jeep, the young one having got stuck in the snow on the road. We have about 4 miles to go to the local R.N. rest-house, the only place to stay in town. At dawn there is a train to Archangel, the only one of the day, so we *must* get on it, or resign ourselves to a day and another night in what is little more than an Arctic wattle village. But it is easy to see that the plump officer is not in his right element; he has difficulty in keeping the Jeep on the deeply-rutted, frozen road, or indeed in selecting the roadway from the surrounding snowscape at all.

We run off into a ditch during the first ten minutes and all get out to push, but the Jeep merely digs herself in. There is a bright moon and the sky is electrical so we set to work happily, but we are soon sweating in our huge furs. And the Jeep will not budge. After three-quarters of an hour of shoving and heaving, a half-dozen Red Army men come strolling down the road and give us a hand. At last we are out! But in turning the Jeep around to take a "safer" road, the plump N.O. embeds us in the snow again, and by this time the soldiers have disappeared. With a liberal handful of English cigarettes the N.O. entices other stray passers-by to help (strange to meet people apparently promenading over the icy country in the middle of the night, in weather below zero!) but they are either not sufficiently numerous, or not sufficiently enthusiastic to budge the car. Finally, Valentine who has been chatting to some Soviet nurses who strolled by about what is to be had in the shops

of London, announces that she will walk the remaining three miles and disappears into the night, acting on the sketchiest instructions, so that we wonder if we will ever see her again.

Well, say I to my wife, you are certainly plunging straight into the heart of Russia—spending your first night on an icy road in the sub-arctic is probably the most fundamental introduction any one could obtain to life in the U.S.S.R.!

At last the Jeep gets out of the snow. It is now 2.30 a.m. We take a different road. This one is no luckier. The unfortunate N.O. lands us in a snowdrift again within five minutes. And this time we are quite alone.

"Most provoking!" he says. "Most unusual thing, this . . . very . . ."

In vain I offer to drive. No, he is used to Jeeps and a stranger could not deal with the frozen road. I am provoked to inquire just how successfully he thinks he is dealing with it; but with unruffled good humour, the N.O. replies, "Will you and your wife just push a bit, and we'll be out of here in a jiffy."

But it proves a very long jiffy.

"Stand aside—I am going astern!" roars the N.O., above the screeching of the tortured engine, the crashing gears. And again, "Heave ho, forward we go!"

The Jeep is motionless.

"Stand back! I am going about! One more heave, now. . . . Full Speed Ahead!"

It is after 3 a.m. and the sky is beginning to lighten and we are both pouring with sweat and, so far as I am concerned, Henry Irving is giving off an aroma compounded of moth balls and moist civet, and we seem to be alone on this steppe in an icy universe and *still* the Jeep does not move out of the rut. But the plump N.O. will *not* lay aside his bonhomie.

"Just once more, please . . . I am going astern!"

And by some miracle, at 3.25 a.m. the Jeep got out at last. The N.O. put his foot hard on the accelerator and drove as fast as he could for the rest-house.

"Faster you go," he bawled cheerfully as the Jeep skidded and leapt over the snowdrifts, "the less likely you are to stick."

About 4 in the morning we were being offered a whisky and water in the Rest House and at 6 a.m., with Valentine materialising out of the snowdrifts without a hair out of place, we were being pushed by a sturdy naval detail into a Russian "hard class" carriage

which already held so many people that, between steam and tobacco smoke it was difficult to see across it. The wooden seats were in three layers and Iris clambered into the top one, only to find a Russian sailor already asleep there; but eventually we all found a perch to ourselves and, with five minutes to go and the engine whistling, our baggage was put into the van under a British naval guard.

Then I think we all went to sleep. Nearly an hour later, the train moved off.

I could not see what the country was like, even after it got light, because the windows were all frozen over. But after four hours of gentle jolting and hysterical whistling by the locomotive we were decanted, on a sunny winter's morning by the frozen margin of a great river, the Dvina, on the far side of which lay the spires and factories of Archangel where, in 1553 the first Englishman landed in Russia.

I think it very likely that Sir Richard Chancellor made *his* voyage to Russia more expeditiously than we made ours.

THOUGHTS IN A SPALNY VAGON

A BRISK BUNCH of matelots met our train, dragging light hand-sleighs after them on which they proposed to get our baggage across the river. We must have been an infernal nuisance to them and yet they could not do too much for us—perhaps because itinerant English faces are rare in Archangel and they liked to have someone fresh to talk to.

They normally lay the railway across the ice in winter but this year they were keeping the Dvina open. The ice-breaker had gone up just before us so there was a jagged gap in the ice about thirty feet wide, across which Russian soldiers were making a rough bridge of planks. First to try the crossing was a man with a barrel of beer. Half-way over, the planks sagged and the barrel slipped half into the water. The spectators jeered and cheered while the unlucky owner struggled to preserve his grip. Some sailors threw ropes over it at last and the beer was saved.

It was terrible to see the number of war cripples—men with only the stump of one leg left, men without arms, men hobbling on hard-looking iron crutches. Most of them wore the remnants of their Red Army uniforms, fast falling apart. They looked white and ill-fed, although they probably get a much better ration than the average civilian.

The first thing you find out here is that the ration is much worse than in Moscow, and that Moscow again is worse than liberated places in the south. There are very few vegetables here and practically no meat. In the open peasants' market in Archangel a goat in milk sells for 15,000 roubles. About £300 at my rate of exchange, which indicates the extraordinary rarity of milk—and meat. The bulk of the people here—remote from the war, with few important industries to serve—get a ration proportionate to their low contribution to the war effort. That is hard, but Russian. It is by ruthless methods such as these that the Russians kept their war going at the darkest hours, when we in the West would have said, "That is *too* much—you cannot ask the people to accept that, they couldn't stand it."

And our people, of course, could not have stood it. Not because they lack courage but because they are used to softer living. Whenever I hear Churchill harking back again to our "finest hour" (his, too, of course) I recall what I have seen in Russia, which makes the material suffering our people went through insignificant in comparison, and that undergone by Americans, of course, nonexistent. It's true the Red Army man at the front has always been fairly well fed (though he doesn't get the meat of the Tommy or the fruit of G.I. Joe) but one has to reckon in terms of over-all morale—the toughness of fibre which the Russian soldier had to possess, *knowing* that his people at home were getting barely sufficient to keep body and soul together, and yet ready to go on fighting in the snow when the Germans were on the Volga and the Second Front just a beautiful dream*.

I don't believe Hitler's race theory is completely fallacious, but rather a twisting out of proportion of a state of affairs which is dictated by climate and dietary. Hitler knew very well that the average German is not the equal of the average Russian in hardihood and resistance to suffering (just as the people of Portugal, for all their amiable qualities, are scarcely the physical equals of the hardy population of Ulster, for example) and his race theory was an attempt to compensate his own people for a consciousness of inferiority. The Slav is more prolific, closer to nature, more spartan than the Teuton, though he may be less painstaking and industrious. By making the ordinary bespectacled, narrow-chested German feel a superman beside the Eastern European Jew, Hitler hoped to stiffen his courage a peg against the real enemy—not "Asiatic Bolshevism," as Hitler called it, but the great hardy Slav race in the East.

But, my God, looking around me here on the banks of the Dvina, how heavily has not the hardy Slav race paid for its victories! Old people little more than walking skeletons, children white and with the bones showing finely blue under the skin, every one in old patched clothing and boots that cannot keep out the wet. The only *normal* people by our standards, are ourselves and the husky, pink-faced English sailors; and that is because the sailors receive a ration that is Heaven knows how many hundreds of daily calories more than the Russians. The basic ration here earlier in the winter

*"Of all the American casualties shipped home from the front, one-third are 'neuro-psychiatric cases'—no wounds, no bones broken. . . . Psychologically most U.S. soldiers are deplorably unprepared for war." *Life* magazine, April 17, 1944.

was just black bread and a little tea, one of our sailors says—no fats, no sugar, no meat at all.

The next man to cross the narrow planks is a legless soldier. Someone goes behind to try to help him, but it's not much use, all he can do is hold the crutches for him while the cripple wriggles on, pulling himself forward with his hands. The stumps of his legs get wet, trailing in the water. A Red Army girl leans across from the farther side and gives him a hand over the last few feet.

Nobody says anything while this painful episode is in progress. Nobody says, "Poor dear fellow" or "He ought to have a wheel-chair—what is the government doing in the matter?" There are no wheel-chairs in Russia. There aren't anything like enough false limbs to go round and some of those available are so painful that the cripples prefer to go around with the stub. To get one of the very few American or English false limbs in circulation is the great ambition of thousands of crippled soldiers.

When we got to the other side of the river the baggage was put on a horse sleigh and taken to the Intourist Hotel where we were to stay. The snow was a foot deep but the air was fairly mild: we were told that in North Russia, as elsewhere in Europe, there has been a tendency of late years for the winters to become milder and the summers wetter.

An elegant Buick car came to meet us. In it was Captain Maund, the senior British naval officer, who carried us off for breakfast to his headquarters in Norway House. We drove along the waterfront, past an enormous modern opera house which looked almost as big as the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, past the customs house built by Peter the Great with its baroque dome and columns and into what used to be known as the "German quarter," a district of big, comfortable wooden houses, of which the Naval Mission was one. It was odd to see the White Ensign flying over a Russian building. The interior was so peculiarly English—a roaring fire in the officers' mess, plenty of bathrooms and each bedroom called after "Nelson" or "Collingwood" or some other naval hero.

"What will it be?" said Captain Maund rubbing his hands in a Pickwickian fashion, "sausage and tomato, bacon and eggs—what?"

It was now 11 a.m. and we had not eaten for 12 hours and pushing that Jeep in the snow had given us an appetite which made two fried eggs and bacon with plenty of coffee and toast and

marmalade the most exquisite luxury. It was the kind of meal you remember with gratitude for years.

We had to spend three days in Archangel waiting for the next train to Moscow and the Naval Mission opened its hearth to us in the spirit of Dingley Dell. We lunched there the first day and dined with Captain Maund in his own flat that night. They were all so extremely good to us that it grieves me, as a conscientious reporter, to have to record that there were a few spirits that struck one as being out of tune—not among the younger officers, some of whom had been through a six-months course in Russian before they came out and were doing their best to understand the country, but among the older hands, some of White Russian origin selected purely for their knowledge of the language. Russia is a tough, hard place at best and being stationed in the North with not much to do is hard on the nerves, but it irked me to be told by one "old hand," to whom I remarked upon the excellence of the rations which the Intourist people were providing, "Oh, they just do it to impress us, you know—but every one knows the people themselves are starving up here." And when we visited the "Inter-Club," the social club for Allied servicemen which the Russians run in the town and saw several hundred Russian girls dancing with the British and American sailors, I observed that this was a splendid idea, giving opportunities for meeting Russian people which existed nowhere else, not even in Moscow. But my suspicious friend remarked, darkly, "Humm . . . and *what* girls—each one of them vetted in advance by the N.K.V.D.!"

This fellow was not basically unfriendly but just unimaginative and *unaware*. His was the mentality that made it possible for a British field-marshal, at a time when we desperately needed Russian friendship, to have himself elevated to the peerage as Baron Ironside of Archangel. On the waterfront there is a monument which might well commemorate this woeful baron's lack of taste: on close inspection it turned out to be a memorial to the Red Army men who fell "fighting the Allied Interventionists."

One of the officers who was going home said he looked forward to a slap-up dinner at the Savoy. We told him that he would not find in any London restaurant anything to compare with the food he was getting in Archangel. The rations for the men, all round, were a great deal better than they would have got in England. Later I asked a Russian the reason for this lavishness and got the same sort of reply that I received on the Soviet front last summer

when protesting that it was not necessary to feed us like kings, just because we were foreigners.

"These soldiers are our guests," he said. "We give them the best we have; and besides, we know they are accustomed to eating better than we Russians in their own country."

In the streets of Archangel it is difficult to distinguish our own men from Russian servicemen. Our men wear Russian-type fur caps, sheepskin coats and "Valinki" (felt boots). The naval officers sport a hat identical with that of the Red Fleet, except that it has our naval insignia in front.

The "Inter-Club" is used by every one: you can get a hair-cut or a drink there and every night there is a film or a dance. Russian girls flock to the dances in such numbers that many have to dance with each other as there aren't enough sailors to go round. You see British naval commanders, American merchant seamen or Tommies dancing with the same girls. The films were mostly English or American. The news-reels—of great interest to the Russians—were mostly a year old. I felt we could do better than this, especially since a fast warship sometimes puts in here, out of convoy season, only four days out from home.

The Russians seem to like giving souvenirs to the crews of departing ships. A British submarine was rather embarrassed by the gift of a reindeer but the crew managed to keep the beast alive all the way to Scotland where, they say, it now ornaments a local zoo.

The "Intourist" Hotel was clean and well-run. We ate in our rooms for fear of giving offence in the common dining-room by reason of the large ration we got as foreigners. Since we were transients, we did not have to present ration-cards and were served with caviare, vodka, a small steak and even some wine that had come all the way from Georgia. There was very little hot-water because of lack of fuel. In the evenings the radio kept repeating the new "Gymn Sovietskova Soyuz," the national anthem which has replaced the "Internationale" and given the U.S.S.R. a revolutionary song as Russian as the "Marseillaise" is French. They were teaching it to school children and played it so often that we soon got to know it by heart. Alexandrov, the leader of the Red Army Choir who adapted the tune from the old Hymn of the Bolshevik Party, has done a beautiful job of orchestration but it annoys one to have the tune always played through thrice, just because there happen to be three verses—even though Russian bands do the same

with "God Save the King" and "The Star-spangled Banner." Enough is enough, especially of a good thing; but there is a vein of almost Germanic thoroughness in the Soviet character which will not recognise this.

One wonders why the Soviet radio will spend hours in teaching the whole nation a new tune or in putting across some new cultural or political line, and at the same time shrink from giving a few lessons in hygiene for which there is a manifest need. The Russians are on the whole a cleanly people. In a crowded tram or underground train in Moscow you will not be aware of that unpleasant effluvia of unwashed bodies which is present under the same conditions in England, at least in all but the richer parts of a city. When there is no private bath, Russians will go to the public bath and steam themselves there, at least once a week. Even remote villages have steam baths. But the use of the lavatory is another matter altogether. Nowhere, not even in an Oriental country like Persia, do you find such filthy lavatories as in the Soviet Union. The Russians are still a peasant people and peasants notoriously despise the lavatory, as a sissified contraption of city slickers. Many villages just don't have them, and are none the worse for the lack. The city populations are mostly fresh from the soil and they carry their peasant conceptions with them, with the result that it is rare indeed to find a tolerable lavatory in any part of the country. I have been in the Kremlin during a session of the Supreme Soviet where decorations and amenities are equal to the best in England or America and yet the people's deputies have left the well-built lavatories there in the condition of pig-sties.

It was the same thing in this Intourist Hotel in Archangel. If you went there early in the morning, just after they had been cleaned, you *might* be lucky: but within half an hour they would become insupportable. In this particular one, we used to find a rat sitting washing his face in the wash-basin. Valiantly, the hotel staff battled, with disinfectant and pail, against the appalling habits of the guests. But it was hopeless. Russians in the mass just don't know how a lavatory works. It is said that when the beautiful subway was being built in Moscow it was proposed to equip it with wash-rooms but that Stalin himself struck these out of the plans, observing: "If you gave our Russian people these things I'm afraid they would make the whole Underground insupportable."

This situation being universally admitted, why not start to

educate the public? In schools you see posters extolling the virtues of cleanliness and every school child is made to wash his hands before eating; but the greater evil is not tackled. When I mention this to Russians, they reply that such a campaign would be "Ne Kulturny": there is a good deal of prudery about such matters, they say. But the present state of affairs is even less "cultured," especially when you recall that in the existing overcrowding in Moscow it is quite usual for 60 or 100 people to have only one privy between them.

But this is the kind of detail which obsesses some visitors to the U.S.S.R. to the exclusion of the overall picture and one does not want to emulate Sir Walter Citrine who, in a work on Russia, betrayed so much irritation over the absence of bath plugs in the Urals that his whole attitude to Socialist Construction seemed coloured thereby. As things turned out, I had an immediate opportunity to sort out my impressions about Russia because when we recrossed the frozen river to take the train for Moscow, we established ourselves aboard with the prospect of looking out of the window for at least 36 hours upon hundreds of miles of sweet nothing at all. A journey just made for contemplation. The generous Navy gave us Tommy Cookers, tinned food, tea and vodka. We cooked for ourselves in the wash-cabinet.

The *Spalny Vagon* was an old-fashioned sleeping-car of the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lit variety and very comfortable. The flat, frozen forest land began to slide past us with almost mesmeric influence. Its completely enigmatic surface afforded not the slightest distraction; rather it helped focus the mind on the abstract. What really lay at the heart of this huge country gripped in ice and war?

I had spent only two months in England—long enough to be re-primed with the current English thinking about Russia. And Laetitia gave me the specialist angle acquired through reading all the diplomatic reports. Between the two one formed the impression that a good many people in England were off on another day dream about Russia, different from some of the previous day-dreams (remember "Red Gold," "The Bolshevik World Conspiracy," "Stalin, the Red Czar" and so on?) but none the less fanciful for all that. Some of the whimsy undoubtedly percolates into the British mind through the Foreign Office—never at ease in dealing with a Marxist state (or one which earnestly endeavours to be

Marxist, if you like) and often less at ease than ever now that it is trying so hard to understand. British diplomats who would be ashamed to deal with American affairs without some acquaintance with the speeches of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln or Theodore Roosevelt (not to mention Wilson, Coolidge and F. D. R.) aspire to handle relations with the U.S.S.R. without making any comparable approach to the moulders of modern Russian policies. I wonder how many of these men have read the principal speeches of Stalin, his periodic reports on the state of the nation: how many have skimmed the cream off Lenin's Collected Works? We have been poorly served by past ambassadors to Moscow, although Sir Stafford Cripps and Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, both competent reporters, have, I believe, succeeded in overcoming to a great extent the deplorable isolation, the lack of all political or even social contacts, which beset a foreign diplomat in Russia (and are not the fault of the diplomat). But the standard of knowledge among foreign diplomats generally in Moscow about the regime to which they are accredited is almost unimaginably low. And it is the diplomats who must assume most of the blame for the *canards* about Russia which are still repeated in the chancelleries of the West, and from there sift through into the newspaper offices and parliaments.

Moscow must be the only capital in the world where the diplomats as a whole are worse informed than the newspaper correspondents and where they openly acknowledge it by asking the correspondents to give them information. Especially since the war began, no ambassador in Moscow, and no head of a military mission has had the chance to see anything like the aspects of the war both at the front and in liberated areas that we correspondents have seen. Every time we came back from one of the trips I recount in this book we were encouraged by ambassadors to tell them all we had seen and I know of one case where an ambassador (not British) actually transmitted as his own dispatch, almost word for word, a news agency story which had already appeared in his own country. From such sources do diplomatic dispatches from Moscow often originate! Clark-Kerr and Harriman, the American ambassador, are in a special category because they see Molotov and Vishinsky quite often and Stalin now and then.

During the preparations for the Second Front Clark-Kerr's contact with the Kremlin was such that when the great moment came all he had to do was to pick up his quill pen and write, in

English, just four words, and send them to Stalin by messenger. The words were: "We are off to-night."

But the generality of diplomats are in no position to be reliable reporters. There is the American diplomat, for example, who tells you: "The Russian masses are land-hungry. The Red Army are all peasants. After the war the army will control the Party and insist on the collective farms being broken up so that the land can return to private hands." No doubt the good man seriously believes this but there is not a newspaper man in Moscow who would not pronounce that to be unmitigated rubbish.

Then there was the English diplomat who used to think that an Officer Caste was being created in the army and that this caste would become the new Official Noblesse and run the country. Another absurdity—but I heard echoes of it in London, in quite knowledgeable quarters.

So while the Moscow train slid soothingly over the frozen rails I made a little list of some of the current beliefs about Russia, and checked them off, thus:

1. Marxism has been forgotten. State Capitalism is in being, differing little from our "chosen instrument" corporations, under national control, like the B.B.C. and the London Passenger Transport Board.

2. There is a great swing away from Internationalism and from the idea of influencing, or even co-operating with foreign states. Soviet Patriotism has become Flag-Waving, like any other nationalism.

3. New privileged classes are here—the managers of Industry, the officers of the Army, who wear epaulettes, have special clubs and are covered in decorations like the Imperial troops.

4. Puritanism is back. And Religion. The Church is regaining its privileges—monasteries are being restored.

5. Russian Manufactures are inferior, many of them Ersatz. Inefficiency and Sloth infest every department of Life. In Russia Nothing Works—(except the Red Army, but then the Army is not fighting for Socialism but for Holy Russia, for the Soil of the Motherland. And then Russians fight well only in defence of their hearths: send the Red Army abroad—into East Prussia, for example—and it would fail).

6. Despite 20 years of would-be Socialism the standard of living of the masses is dreadfully low—lower than it would have been if

Democracy and a liberal Capitalism had been allowed to take their course.

Enough for a start, those six. But interwoven through them all, don't forget the Awful Contradiction which perplexes every conscientious Capitalist abroad and which is simply this: until June, 1941, Russia was a Communist State, and since we know that Communism Does not Work, she was backward, enslaved by a Proletarian Dictatorship and in every way inferior to the Western Powers; since Germany attacked her she has proved herself our strongest Ally, with Armed Forces and a war industry and agriculture remarkably well developed, hence she can no longer be a Communist State but must be turning back towards Private Initiative, Encouragement of the Individual, and True Religion under the sober guidance of that grand Elder Statesman and friend of Winston Churchill—Marshal Stalin.

Take Point One. Has Marxism been forgotten? I think not. Although it is certainly a pleasure to be in a country where *nobody talks about Socialism any more*, no Brains Trust debates whether we might risk a little National Control without ruining our economy—because everybody takes Socialism for granted, like free air, because 20 years ago private ownership in the Means of Production was abolished, and remains abolished to this day. The coins you handle, the mastheads of all newspapers still display the closing words of the Communist Manifesto—"Workers of the world, Unite!" But of course no Russian has ever claimed that he lived under Communism—merely under the preliminary stages of Socialism from which the Marxist hopes to evolve Communism in the fullness of time. No productive enterprise in Russia is owned by an individual nor does any such enterprise pay dividends to individuals. The Moscow transport system, unlike the L.P.T.B., pays no dividend nor has there been any question of its fares being raised owing to "increased running costs" since the war. Its employees earn just what they did before the war because their rations are priced just as cheaply as before, their rentals have not increased, nor do they pay anything for medical care or for educating their children (except a nominal fee for higher education). There are two kinds of farms—State Farms, run directly by the state and Collective Farms, run collectively by the peasantry, who own their own cottages and domestic plots and animals *and sell the produce* thereof on a "free" market and receive payment in money or kind from the takings of the Collective, after a con-

tribution to the State has been made. Individuals can own a country-cottage or even a small house in a city if they want, but ownership of several houses is not permitted. You cannot live through being a Landlord or through investing your savings in an enterprise, and if you run a one-man shop you may not hire any one else to work for you. You could, if you fancy, call a State Farm, or even a war factory in the Urals, an example of "State Capitalism." Name-calling never hurt a skin. Personally, I would call a Urals plant where the director might get 5000 roubles a month and the most productive Stakhanovite working under him 15,000 or even more and where nobody outside made a kopek of profit out of the place—I would call that a Socialist plant. But as I said, labels mean nothing. National Socialism was a pretty sound conception until Hitler came along and made the portmanteau word "Nazi" a byword for men yet unborn to spit upon.

As long ago as 1925—before the first Five-Year Plan and the collectivisation of agriculture, when the N.E.P. system still existed—Stalin made the point that although the Soviet State industry had many defects, it was none the less *Socialist* industry.

"I could mention," said Stalin, "quite a lot of bourgeois State apparatus which works better and more economically than our proletarian State apparatus. But a bourgeois State apparatus, even if it should work better than ours, is working for the capitalists whereas our proletarian State apparatus, even if it gets stuck in a rut sometimes, is still working on behalf of the proletariat and against the bourgeoisie. In Ford's factories all the work is done with great precision and there is perhaps less speculation than in some of our State factories: but Ford's factories are working for the capitalists, for Ford; whereas our enterprises, where there is a good deal of speculation sometimes and where the technique of the enterprise is often far from satisfactory, are none the less working for the proletariat."

Point Two. There is a great swing away from Internationalism firstly because the Russians feel they have expended a great deal of solicitude in worrying about the problems of other nations—solicitude which has not been returned because the working-classes of other nations were not strong enough to activate their goodwill beyond the stage of passing friendly resolutions (the German Left failed utterly to prevent the monster Hitler from ravaging the Socialist Fatherland): and secondly because the U.S.S.R. is now

strong enough, economically and militarily, not to be dependent on the goodwill of the other five-sixths of the world.

A war which has proved so much vaster and more terrible than the war against Napoleon has liberated latent feelings of patriotism among Soviet people and the rulers of Russia are shrewdly harnessing these feelings to drive productive machinery, instead of letting them be released in mere flag-waving. After all, why should not Socialists be patriots? Socialism actually induces love of country. A Russian who feels that his country belongs to *him* will naturally be more patriotic in its defence than if he feels it belongs to an exploiting class. Not for him our English dilemma under which the Tory uses the national flag as though it were a party emblem while the Leftist is out in the cold feebly waving the Red Flag of an International Solidarity which no longer exists since German workers in their millions killed and were killed for Hitler.

In the early twenties, when a Negro comrade could urinate on the throne of the Czars in the Kremlin with the smiling approval of Russian Communists, Internationalism reached a peak from which there was bound to be a falling-off. Year after year, the Russians hoped that the workers in the West would win Socialism and so make Russia's own socialisation easier. Year after year, they were disappointed. Stalin's slogan of "Socialism in One Country" meant that, as they slowly won through to Socialism with bitter sacrifices, the Russian Communists felt correspondingly less esteem for Western Socialists who talked so much but achieved so little. After the failure of two English Labour governments, the failure of the American Left to elect even one Socialist to Congress, how can Russians feel very warmly about the ineffectual Leftists in the West? Indeed they must by now be a little weary of the "Liberal" (in the American sense) who talks Red but acts Yellow. At the same time, the "Internationale" remains the anthem of the Party and the Russian must hope that eventually the Western World will follow his example because that would lighten the burden of economic self-sufficiency. To quote Stalin again, from that 1925 speech: "So long as we are surrounded by capitalist States we must devote all our energies to making our country remain an independent entity based on the home market." But he adds that when other countries become Socialist—"then we shall be able to change over to a policy of incorporating our country into the general system of socialist development."

And even 19 years ago Stalin was refuting the argument that

Russia needed to carry on Communist propaganda in other countries because, said he, it was enough that delegations of the workers should visit the U.S.S.R. and should diffuse tidings about her way of life throughout the world.

"That is the best and the most effective form of propaganda," said Stalin. If that were so then, how much more true is it to-day when a Russia strengthened by that way of life is drawing to the close of a victorious war against the most formidable military power the world has seen?

Point Three. Privilege? Well, of course privileges for special services are part and parcel of Russian Socialism. Since the war privileges for the most productive workers in war plants have gone so far that these men often earn more than their nominal "boss," the director of the factory. All sorts of quite humble jobs have some privilege or special "perk" going with it, to make it more attractive. The girls in red caps like generals who run the Moscow Subway get privileges which other transport workers don't receive—higher wages, better uniforms and their own apartment houses, equipped above the average. But because of that one could not claim that the Moscow Subway girls formed a "privileged class." One might as well say that any peasant with a small family is "privileged" because he raises and sells his own produce and occupies much more "living-space" in his cottage than most town-dwellers manage to obtain.

The point about all privilege in the U.S.S.R. is that it is given as reward for duties performed: it is not inherited nor can it be bought for money. No amount of money will win you a four-room apartment in Moscow, where most people have to live in one room, no amount of money will entitle you to stalls in the theatre or the right to buy a fur coat in a government store. These things are given as rewards by factories, by Soviet institutions or by the Army. A very few wangers in the big cities may succeed in winning privileges by graft or pressure but the proof that such cases are exceptional lies in the fact that there is no *social envy* in Russia. The sight of a well-fed man driving down a poor street in a limousine, which would arouse sub-conscious resentment in London, creates not a ripple in Moscow because it is known that the car is an official privilege that goes with a specific job. And the extent of privilege is mighty small compared with what we are accustomed to at home. Stalin's flat is said to consist of three rooms: he has a wooden "dacha" or country cottage near Moscow

but neither are his property, nor has he a car of his own. People's Commissars, foreign ambassadors and foreign journalists all receive the same "Category One" ration in war-time so that I am in a position to appreciate what kind of food Stalin has at home and, believe me, it is not very variegated nor is it over-filling.

I know Andrievsky, the head of the Trust which imports and exports films; he also produces some pictures and holds a position in the Russian industry comparable to that held by Sir Alexander Korda in England. But Korda would not be satisfied for long with *this* film magnate's style of living. This man has three suits, he lives in one room, has difficulty in getting cigarettes and has not enough food to do any entertaining. His job carries with it a comfortable Z.I.S. limousine and chauffeur, which collects him from his bed-sitting room in the morning and takes him to the office. His salary, I happen to know, is less than half the allowance which I, and the other correspondents, receive for living in Moscow. Of course, he is a privileged man and his position is admired and coveted, no doubt, by many. But in his way of life he is very, very much closer to his own workers than it is possible to conceive of in the West.

As for the Army, there is a drive on to raise the cultural level of the Army officer, but I must say that it has still a very long way to go. Nobody who mixes at all with the Red Army can have any doubt that the Soviet officer in the bulk remains what he has been since the Revolution—an educated peasant. Both private and officer now wear epaulettes; the officer's are of gold or silver thread, but physically and mentally there is not much between them. Not enough, according to the authorities. Because at the start of the war the regular officers were mostly old N.C.O.s and the war-time privates came from all walks of life, the level of education among the privates was often as high, sometimes higher, than that of the officers. So it was decided to try to raise the officer standard. Most officer's wives from cities lived in one room, like the soldier's wives; an effort was made to give them better accommodation. The officers were given clubs to go to where they were encouraged to acquire some social polish. As with my film magnate friend, one would have to increase the privileges of Army officers far more than has been done at present before there could be any risk of segregating them, because the general standard of life in Russia is so simple.

Nor do the officer's children receive privileges because of their

father's position: they go to the same schools as private's children. The Suvorov Academies of which so much has been heard are for the most part filled with war orphans or the children of poor but deserving soldiers. They are intended for "poor scholars," just as Eton was when it was founded. Might not these academies in time go the way of Eton? Well, anything is possible, but at the moment there is no sign of it: the academies, catering for only a few thousand boys, merely scratch the surface of the vast generation of homeless and uncared-for children produced by the war. They are exceptions to the educational rule, and their function is specialised and limited.

Point Four. Ever since Lenin delivered his famous reproof to Madame Kollontai for her theory of Free Love, Puritanism has played a part in Communist ideology. Sex, said the talented Soviet ambassadress, should be as simple a function as drinking a glass of water. But, said Lenin, one prefers to drink from a glass that has not been touched by other lips.

There is no doubt that Communism absorbs impulses which in other ages were canalised into religion. Stalin was not the only young man of his time to enter the Communist party by way of a theological seminary: many a young man who fifty years ago would have become a priest becomes a Party worker for precisely the same reason as formerly attracted men into the Church—the desire to better the lot of his fellows. But there is so much that is non-puritanical in the Russian character that I do not think there is any reason to fear Communist Puritanism as a repressive force. Rather, it acts as a gentle brake on the volatility of the Russian nature; it counteracts sloth and works towards efficiency. This Communist Puritanism overwhelmed the lax and corrupt Orthodox Church of the Tsars, trampled it underfoot and put in its place the ideal of the Communist missionary, labouring to save bodies in this world rather than souls in the next. A religion of Scout Masters, if you wish to make fun of it, of Horatio Alger-ian Self-Help; a religion most attractive to the young. And so it is to-day, when the Churches are open again and the State even has a department of ecclesiastical affairs.* The Orthodox Church proved itself loyal in this war, the peasants in many areas wanted its ministrations at funerals and weddings and so did the faithful in the towns, but when I went to see the Archbishop of York participate in a

*Jocularly known as "Narkomop"—"People's Commissariat for Opium (for the People)."

service in the Moscow cathedral younger citizens were conspicuous by their absence and the more educated citizens too. *For them the cult founded by Lenin is still paramount.* The church was filled with peasant women and older manual workers of both sexes.

The Orthodox Church now gets aid from the State in the repair of churches and it is said that training schools for priests will soon reopen but the Church is in no sense a State Church, as it used to be. It is much more like the Free Churches in England—each church is supported by contributions from the parishioners and no income of course is derived from land ownership. The Soviet ecclesiastical department supervises all religious cults, including Moslems and Buddhists, but it is mainly concerned with the Orthodox Church which is overwhelmingly the cult most favoured by the masses. And the Princes of that Church, who have repeatedly expressed their loyalty to Stalin as the leader of the Soviet State, will, of course, exert no little influence in other Slav lands: they will doubtless be helpful in widening relations between their country and the Anglican Church and the sister churches in Greece and the Levant.

The Russian Press, literature and drama are, if you will, puritanical to the extent that the papers carry no sensational or crime news, you cannot buy a "dirty book" anywhere in the U.S.S.R. because such things just are not printed and both plays and films are usually devoid of bedroom interest. It might be argued that Soviet Art suffers from the fact that it would be difficult for an André Gide or a Baudelaire even to get his works published. But apart from a perhaps over-zealous discouragement of smut in the printed page I cannot feel that Soviet life has become dulled by a return to stricter standards. There is, of course, nothing like the terrible British Sunday; rest days are brightened with theatrical performances and sporting meets and the shops take it in turns to remain open.

Point Five. We have no means of knowing what Russian manufactures will ultimately measure up to because the country is still in such an early stage of industrialisation that quality has had to be sacrificed to quantity—and still, as every one who has been to Russia knows, consumer goods are snapped up the moment they are put on sale, so great is the disparity between purchasing-power and production. In Persia you will find Soviet matches of the standard of Bryant and May, made for export, deliberately for the purpose of getting foreign exchange. But buy matches in

Moscow and you will find the quality far inferior. This proves that the Russians *can* make quality goods but that they have not yet been able to afford the time or material to make such goods in quantity—except, of course, in war material. The Soviet tanks, the “Katushas” and the field artillery, the “Stormovik” fighter-bomber and the Yak and Lavochkin fighters are functional and beautifully made. Soviet tinned goods are generally of higher quality than English or American: this is because canning is still a luxury and only the best produce is canned. Russian textiles—especially real silks and cottons—are of first-class quality and the designs are good; the only trouble is there has never yet been enough of them. Woollen goods are nothing like so good as the British, of course. Most shoes on Russian feet are of poor quality; but on the other hand the high-boots made for the Army are the finest leather—you could not buy such a boot in England for £5 or more.

Inefficiency and sloth? Well, let us say, a different tempo. Russians never seem to be in a hurry; yet the Red Army is capable of the most amazingly swift movement, with all the ramifications of organisation on the “Q” side which that entails. In Soviet institutions you meet with bureaucracy certainly (it is the constant butt of the Soviet papers): sometimes it is of the most maddening kind. This, I am persuaded, is largely due to what Stalin calls inadequate “cadres,” to the fact that the educational system has not yet produced enough trained administrators—let alone enough skilled engineers, enough good doctors. In Russia there is still a chronic scarcity of “intellectuals,” although what has been done in 20 years to train a predominantly peasant population to run a modern state is astonishing enough, when you come to think of it. Even before the Revolution the educated middle-class was proportionately small. The revolution of 1917 removed an entire ruling-class; between 3 and 5 million educated people emigrated. Imagine what England would be like if almost the entire professional class, almost every one who had received a higher education were to emigrate, leaving the building of a socialist society to working men and women—miners, railwaymen, dockers, aided by a few elementary school teachers and the like. The situation would not be parallel even then because the British working-class had reached a far higher educational level than the Russian workers had by 1917. The Russian peasantry at that time could not, in the main, either read or write. The grandparents of

most of the leading people in the U.S.S.R. to-day were serfs and while serfdom did not necessarily mean absolute slavery, because some masters and landlords were humane, it did rule out that spirit of independence which the British labouring class has always had. Russia never had a yeomanry, *she never knew a Cromwell*, she had never enjoyed a revolution until 1917. The State inculcated in the peasantry a consciousness of their own inferiority and the State Church made a virtue of a servility which even to-day, when we encounter it in some old, unreconstructed peasant, strikes us as Oriental and repellent to a degree. Those who did manage to climb into the ruling class before 1917 were taught to despise their own language as uncultured: they were taught that the Russians were a race of boors, of "Dark People" and that the only means to salvation lay in imitating the Civilisation of France, Germany or England. I know a middle-aged woman in Moscow to-day whose father, a Russian general, only spoke Russian to military inferiors or domestic servants; his own life was conducted entirely in French.

It was a working class indoctrinated with this frightful inferiority complex which had, first to learn to run the existing state, and then to build a socialist state on the shaky foundations left by a devastating civil war and a virtual general strike declared by the remaining educated classes against the new society.

No wonder one still meets with inefficiency, due to plain lack of specialised knowledge; or bureaucracy, due to the half-educated being given jobs that are too large for their horizons.

Nevertheless twenty years have sufficed to produce from this unpromising soil a whole new generation of skilled people, the so-called "Soviet Intelligentsia," to give them their unbecoming name, who are unlike any class yet seen in this world. They are mainly men and women who have worked with their hands but who have yet acquired the skills needed to administer provinces, edit newspapers, run huge industrial enterprises or become leaders in science or the arts. This class need apologise to no one for their existence. They may be a bit rough-hewn, they may lack polish, but they possess the ability and the will to do all the specialised tasks which in the West are still done in the main by persons of gentle birth and long-inherited habits of scholarship.

Point Six. Yes, the standard of living is still low. There are many reasons for this, and all of them good ones—apart from the inevitable impoverishment due to the war. Russia has always been

a poor country and she still exudes a scoured, aseptic sort of poverty, somewhat like one finds in Scotland. The Russian people are used to living as though they were perpetually "camping out." And life in Moscow to-day is very much like the life of students in *Bohème*; you don't think of a house of your own or of having half a dozen suits in your cupboard; you think in terms of a good, clean bed; a stout pair of shoes, enough to eat, and a smoke and a drink come happily when you can get them. Your values are those of the soldier; you learn how to make yourself a comfy billet out of the least promising surroundings. You learn how to be satisfied with very little. And you know that *nobody* has very much.

Soviet Russia inherited from the Czars a vast Oriental Empire. But since she gave her "lesser breeds" the same status as their former rulers she no longer has colonies to exploit or subject people to work for her and consequently she cannot procure raw materials cheaply. Why is chocolate still a luxury in Russia? Because it is not produced by cheap coloured labour. Why are tea and coffee dear? Because the people who work in the tea plantations earn substantially the same share for their production as the prosperous collective farmer in the environs of Moscow. People who maintain that we no longer "exploit" India or West Africa would soon revise their ideas if they were obliged to pay the labour which produces cheap raw materials there the same rates as apply in the British Isles.

Why does the city of Moscow look so shabby? Why is housing in the capital worse than in many provincial cities? Could not the Socialist State make the whole capital as fine as the Underground Railway? Of course it could. But deliberately it has refrained from doing so. A determined effort has been made *not* to develop Moscow or Leningrad at the expense of the rest of the country but to develop the backward areas at the same rate as European Russia. Inevitably it has not completely succeeded; conditions *are* smoother in Moscow than in most parts of the country and you can buy things in the Mostorg department-store which are never seen in Sverdlovsk.- But Moscow has *not* been turned into a flashy, misleading advertisement for the Soviet regime as St. Petersburg was for the old regime. Moscow is shabby and raw: it is substantially the same as the rest of the U.S.S.R. St. Petersburg, on the other hand, was a glorious, costly, quite irrelevant apex to the Czarist pyramid which bore about as much relation to the squalor and

backwardness of the rest of the country as does the city of Bath to Wigan Pier.

The principal reason for the failure of Production to keep pace with purchasing-power is the reason given by Stalin twenty years ago, viz.: "So long as we are encircled by capitalist States, there will be a persistent tendency on their part to attack us. This constant menace compels us to keep an army and fleet for our defence whose upkeep runs us into an expenditure of hundreds of millions of roubles per annum. Were it not for the constant threat of intervention we could utilise these sums for the strengthening of our industries, improvement of agriculture, the inauguration of compulsory elementary education and so forth."

Large armaments may be sustained by advanced industrial countries but twenty years ago Russia had not yet *started* on her Industrial Revolution; she was still a peasant agricultural country. Stalin inherited from Lenin a country that had made only a few faltering steps in the direction of Socialism. In his Five Year Plans Stalin took Russia over two enormous hurdles simultaneously—he carried through her Industrial Revolution and her Socialisation at one and the same time. And that is the reason why Stalin has become in the eyes of Russians almost a greater than Lenin; for Lenin laid the foundations but Stalin carried through the great construction job himself. He did it at the cost of deliberately pegging the standard of living at a low level. No other course was open to him. To quote him again, from a speech in 1925: "We might raise the wages of our workers, not merely to the pre-war (1913) figure but considerably higher. This would slow down the development tempo of our manufacturing industry for such development in existing circumstances (lack of foreign loans, lack of credits, etc.) can only take place if we accumulate the amount of surplus profits necessary for the financing of industry. If we were to raise wages unduly, no such accumulation of surplus profits would be possible."

And then new factories could not have been built. The system was simply this: A factory was built, the workers in it accepted a very modest standard of living, the money that might have given them higher wages went instead into a development fund and out of this fund in due course another factory was constructed. The workers in this factory, in their turn, worked for a small return and out of their labours a third factory was built. Easy to see why Soviet Russia could not possibly have become, in twenty years, a

glittering Workers' Paradise: but a foretaste of what lies ahead is possible, even now in the midst of war, when you see that already it has become possible to pay a Stakhanovite worker in a war plant 15,000 roubles or even 20,000 roubles a month (which is to say two or three times what I, a favoured foreign correspondent, receive to live on in an expensive hotel for foreigners).

There never will come a time when *all* surplus profit from a given factory will be handed back to its workers because repairs and improvements will always be necessary; but the moment *sufficient* factories have been built (as has already happened in the armaments industry, for example) the workers will certainly receive back the greater part of the surplus profit which their own labours have created. We shall then see under which system the majority of mankind will prefer to live—that which returns surplus profit to its creators or that which pays surplus profit away in dividends to people who have never seen the inside of the factory.*

I am persuaded that the Soviet living-standard is higher to-day than it would have been if the Russians had tried to carry through an Industrial Revolution through Democracy and liberal Capitalism because, by living for twenty years on their own fat as it were, the Russians have saved themselves the expenditure of billions of tribute to foreign capitalists, a process which would have impoverished the nation as it has impoverished Egypt and Mexico and every other nation that has tried it. Development through foreign loans under Capitalism would have put a gloss on Moscow and Leningrad and Kiev: it would have produced a middle-class and afforded thousands of comfortable jobs for foreign engineers and business men. Russia would have had smart hotels and country clubs and golf courses but how would the lot of the illiterate peasant and factory worker have been improved by all this?

Take this true story of a mining engineer I know, a director in a famous South African firm, who went to Russia concession-hunting in the early twenties. He signed a contract for developing a gold-bearing area with one of the autonomous regions out east and came to Moscow to have it ratified by the central government. They kept him waiting for weeks. He idled away his time in the Grand Hotel near the Red Square. Then one night he was called

*The Capitalist case is that Surplus Profit under Capitalism is used to build fresh enterprise. Is it? In 1937 Beecham's Pills paid a dividend of 85 per cent. Was this used to build a new Beecham's factory to produce still more pills or did it merely go for this or that personal expenditure by shareholders?

to the office of a People's Commissar who said, "Are you quite satisfied with this contract?"

"Entirely satisfied," said my acquaintance. "The terms are excellent. I propose to begin operations right away."

The Commissar thereupon tore the contract in two.

"The contract should never have been made," said he. "The fact that *you* are delighted means that it cannot possibly benefit the working people of the Soviet Union. We shall keep this concession until we can develop it for ourselves. The contract is not ratified."

MOSCOW AT WAR

FROM THESE rarefied observations we were decanted, 700 miles farther on and 36 hours later, on to the sub-zero wooden platform in Moscow station. The train arrived precisely on time. Fascism, it seems, is not the only propellant that keeps trains punctual.

My Russian secretary Nadja Markova was marking time on the platform in a squirrel coat and high boots.

Leningrad had been liberated while we were travelling and she greeted me with the good news that we would go there very soon.

With great difficulty Nadja had procured a car (there are no taxis in war-time and the fleet of 9 Intourist limousines which had carried foreigners at the start of the war had now shrunk to one, usually taken over by some junior diplomat, too minor to have a car of his own). Non-diplomatic foreigners have to get about on foot or in the Metro and if they have luggage with them, it is just too bad. So we were very fortunate. Two sheep-skinned porters toted our baggage. They were satisfied with tips totalling 200 roubles; £4 at my rate of exchange, which was generous from their point of view without being extreme. You couldn't buy much in the way of unrationed goods with 100 roubles at that time and there were only two trains a week from the north.

We drove to the Metropole Hotel, where nearly all correspondents stay. It would be pretty difficult to know England well if one spent one's life in the Regent Palace Hotel; that was the fate we had to struggle against in the Metropole. If you ever saw the old film with Lee Tracy called "Clear All Wires," you will have a fairly good idea of the Metropole. A cavernous place which during the revolution was the headquarters of the White Guards and was shelled by the Red field-guns, it possesses vast suites with candelabra and grand pianos and marble pillars, in the grand ducal tradition, and a wheezy elevator in which Bernard Shaw once got stuck with Lady Astor. It also boasts scores of miserable inside rooms where no daylight ever enters because of the "blue-out" of the great glass dome over the central court. Here I was to open my "Window in Moscow." After a couple of months I got three small

rooms *en suite* overlooking the Theatre Square, with the fat Corinthian façade of the Bolshoi Theatre—to my mind much more imposing than the Paris Opera—filling every window frame. But to start with, all we could get was a tiny room on the fifth floor. Nadja, who comes from Odessa and exudes a thick Russian gloom which makes the stranger exclaim, “Good Heavens, then it *is* true about the Russian Soul,” reacted in character, observing that she was sure there would be bugs. As a matter of fact, she was right. The only time in Russia, before or since, when I encountered any.

If you have ever wondered why the war news from Russia has seemed so *thin*, you must bear the Metropole in mind, for the correspondents of British and American papers spend far too much time in it and far too little at the front.

This is not in the slightest degree their fault. It is due to the extraordinarily inept Public Relations policy pursued by the Soviet Government and maintained in the face of every kind of plea, persuasion, threat and blandishment over three long years. Every correspondent who has ever come to Russia since 1941 has done his best to modify the system. Innumerable letters have been written to Stalin, innumerable protests have been addressed to the Press Department of the Foreign Office, the Association of British and American Correspondents in the U.S.S.R. has passed resolution after resolution, but nothing has ever been done. The greatest war the world has ever known, involving campaigns of such a magnitude as to make Napoleon's six-month campaign of 1812 a mere bagatelle, has never been properly reported in the papers of the world. It has never been adequately handled in the Soviet press, either, for with the exception of such men as Simonov, Grossman, Tikhonov, Krieger and a few more, the work of Russian war correspondents has not been distinguished; many have died in line of battle but many more have been content to jog along, day after day, reporting battles they have never seen, cooking up dispatches from Intelligence reports at Corps Headquarters, or even further in the rear, with the result that a struggle involving at one time something between ten and fifteen million men has had a flat insipid quality about it.

I have read more graphic reports about a cricket match at Lord's in peace-time than about some of the great battles in Russia. Day after day one would read parrot-phrases like “N. Unit, making its way to the rear of the enemy, took the defenders by surprise” . . . “N. Unit advanced into terrain which lent itself to

defence and which was, in fact, rich in defensive installations" . . . "The enemy, bringing up reinforcements from the high command reserves, launched repeated counter-attacks, but our troops, brushing them aside, continued their advance," and so on. Day after day the same phrases, although the vast front was studded with every conceivable variety of military situation, sufficient to provide new manuals for every army in the world for the next hundred years.

What a stupendous, tragic waste of talent and opportunity! Correspondents who had reported the Battle of Britain and the war in the Pacific would come to Russia, eager to go to the front and record the historic struggle of the Red Army. Invariably they were disappointed. During the first 18 months of the war, there were hardly any trips to the front at all. Thereafter, there might be a trip once in four months. Only in late 1943 and in 1944 did trips become a little more frequent. And even then the places visited were arbitrarily selected and often the delay was so great that by the time one reached the chosen spot, the battle had shifted from that sector into another, hundreds of miles away.

A man like Quentin Reynolds, who did a tremendous job for the British cause in America before Pearl Harbour, merely by reporting what he was freely permitted to see in England, came twice to the U.S.S.R. with the object of performing the same service for Russia. Reynolds was not a British propagandist but that rich Boston Irish voice on the radio, or that racy homely style in the press, must have been worth many divisions to us in goodwill in our hour of need, when millions of Americans were still decidedly neutral, wanting no part of an "Imperialist war." The British Ministry of Information, sensibly laying off official propaganda, merely gave Reynolds, and a few more like him, their heads: the result was more goodwill for Britain in America than could have been won by 100 high-paid lecturers.

But in Russia Reynolds got nowhere. They gave him one inadequate trip to a rear area. He had interviewed Churchill but was not allowed to see Stalin. Like all of us, he waited weeks for the simplest request to be fulfilled by the Narkomindel (Foreign Office). Like us, he found that it took at least one month to arrange a visit even to somewhere as commonplace as a collective farm; a fortnight of telephoning, letter-writing and waiting to get inside a Russian school; and as for visiting a factory, that might well take 6 weeks. After a few months of this, he left in disgust—not

to write anti-Soviet articles outside but to cherish the belief that no country in the world was so inept at propaganda as the Soviet Union.

Indeed the old idea that the Russians are clever propagandists is years out of date. Before 1936, when foreigners were still received pretty freely in the country, this may have been so, although the literature put out by Intourist abroad was often very wide of the mark. But latterly it has seemed that the rulers of Russia just do not care what the rest of the world thinks of them. Russian embassies abroad churn out daily thousands of words of "hand-outs" which find their way into wastepaper baskets in hundreds of newspaper offices. The best journalists and writers in the Allied countries would have come to Russia and gladly told the immortal story of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, as it is called, in language comprehensible to their own people, at no more cost or trouble to the Soviet authorities than the provision of a few cars for travelling and an insignificant ration of tinned food. The same applies to foreign policy. A press conference now and then would have kept foreign journalists informed of Soviet foreign policy, enabling them to interpret it to their own people, subject naturally to the check of the war-time censorship—an arrangement which one would suppose would be highly convenient to the Narkomindel. Yet since I have been in Russia such a conference did not take place more than once in four months and even then it was not a "conference" as we understand it—just a prepared statement on some specific point which was read out by Molotov or Vishinsky, followed by some 10 minutes devoted to questions more often dodged than answered. Not once since the war began has a military press conference been held in Moscow.

Russians complain that there is still distrust and misunderstanding of their policy abroad, even among those who call themselves "friends of the Soviet Union." But in this matter one can waste no sympathy on the Russians: most of it is entirely their own fault. W. R. Hearst or Colonel McCormack, presumably, will be anti-Russian until the day of their oft-anticipated demise: but when men like H. N. Brailsford, Vernon Bartlett or even Harold Laski fall foul of the Soviet press, being roundly rebuked for their wilful misinterpretation of Soviet policy, then it ought to be clear to the Kremlin that somebody very high up in the Narkomindel ought to be fired. When even one's friends misunder-

stand one, then surely there is something radically wrong with the foreign information department of any government. Perhaps "firing" is too mild. Reduced, like every one else at times, to fits of lonely gibbering imbecility in my room, to almost unbearable frustration over the *refusal* of the Narkomindel to help me give the friendly British public the information it wanted about Russia, I used to wonder whether there was not a bunch of saboteurs somewhere in the foreign office, deliberately blocking the development of understanding and good relations between the Allies. It was not a question of censorship. The Soviet war censorship is, on the whole, reasonable and mild: I found it preferable to the political and military censorship in India. It was a question of incapacity and-or inability to furnish the most elementary information. Some 15 top-flight British and American correspondents would be in Russia, saying in effect to the foreign office, "We are here to report the war and to build closer and friendlier relations between our nations—will you help us, please?"

And the answer was, No. Not, I am sure, because the Russians don't *want* such relations; but because the relevant government department either did not dispose of men with the necessary, although limited mental capacity or else because somebody very high up had decided that the Soviet Union was now so strong that she need not bother about building goodwill for herself among the nations of the world.

Perhaps the latter is closer to the truth. If you believe that Marxism is a light that must inevitably shine, sooner or later, for the whole world, that must alter your views about expediency. But, on the other hand, why not do something to hasten that illumination?

As a Marxist, it seemed to me that the Press Department of the Narkomindel was not only acting against the national interests of the U.S.S.R. by preventing the magnificent story of the Great Patriotic War being adequately told to the world but was also obstructing the international cause of Socialism. As it is, the bare facts of the Red Army's official communiques over 3 years have sounded a clarion of socialist affirmation in every country in the world. How much stronger would this call have been had it been supplemented by ample dispatches done on the spot by British and American correspondents in the style suited to their respective publics?

Returning to the Metropole, it would be wrong to suggest that

life there was all frustration. On the contrary, it could be rich, especially if one came there from the Pacific theatre or Burma, where people really "rough it." Apart from being a bit under-heated in winter, the foreigner in Moscow has not really roughed it since the grim winters of 1941 and 1942: he is a favoured person. The correspondent who has not enjoyed the society of a woman for months at a time, or who has known nothing better than the Gold Diggers of Cairo or Delhi, deems it bliss indeed to be able to take a Russian girl to the theatre without having to compete for the favour with half a dozen senior officers. Tchaikovsky's 1st Symphony being played . . . an eager face beside one . . . a walk through the frozen streets in the early morning, with the moon still up. . . . The stressful air of Moscow is strangely sympathetic to romance. And though we may accept the distinguished evidence of Mr. Bruce Lockhart and Mr. Alexander Werth to the effect that the Russian girl is apt to display an excess of affection, that seems a very charming fault to a man whose war has been spent in the African desert or the jungles of Arakan. Some of us will never hear some piece of Russian music again without remembering a rapt Russian face. . . .

When we arrived in February, 1944, there were 18 theatres open, each of them playing a repertory, so that in one week the choice of 108 plays was much wider than could be found in London. Semyonova and Lepechinskaya were dancing alternately at the Bolshoi and the incomparable Galina Ulanova was shortly due, on her way back to her home at the Kirov Theatre (the old Imperial Mariinsky) in Leningrad. Ulanova is the daughter of two dancers in Pavlova's company and is I believe by far the greatest ballerina alive to-day, as the world will see if she is able to fulfil her desire to dance in London and Paris after the war. At thirty she is now in her prime, but she is very delicate, being threatened with consumption, and not permitted by her doctor to dance more than four times a month. We must hope that we shall be able to see her at Covent Garden within the next couple of years.

Apart from the Soviet ballet, which makes the Sadler's Wells company and the various relicts of the old Diaghilev troupe seem very weedy shoots off the old classic tree, you could spend an evening in other delightful ways, even if you knew very little Russian. At the Mossoviet Theatre, which is run by the Moscow city council, there was a fine production of "Othello"; on the vast stage of the Red Army Theatre, which vies with Radio City

Music-hall in New York for supremacy as the most sumptuous theatre in the world, you could see a chronicle play called *Men of Stalingrad*; at the Mali Theatre *Pygmalion* was playing (Eliza Doolittle's "Not bloody likely!" rendered into Russian as "To the devil with your mother!" causing the same gasps of delighted horror as Mrs. Patrick Campbell got in London forty years ago); at the Moscow Art Theatre you could see a Russian view of *Pickwick* in "Pickvikski Klub" or *The School for Scandal* as well as the Tchekhov classics. The Arts Theatre, having become an international institution, has lost something of its first sparkle: the acting there is traditional, like that at the Comédie Française, but it would be hard to find anything so flawless as its production of *The Three Sisters* in any theatre in the world. Certainly, nowhere else are the Russian classics played so exquisitely.

If the repertory at the main theatres concentrates rather heavily on the classics, that is because millions of Russians have still not had a chance to see them. The Bolshoi and the other leading theatres are intended to be people's theatres, like the Old Vic in London: every one is supposed to have a chance to go there, no matter how long it may take for his turn to come around. And if they dance "Swan Lake" at the Bolshoi on an average once a fortnight you can see that it will still be a long while before every one who wants to see this most perfect of all ballets manages to do so. If the Old Vic had in its repertory a magnificent production of *Hamlet* which it was felt that every one of the 10 million people in the London Metropolitan area should have a chance to see, it would have to run for a great many years. This circumstance, rather than an oppressive ideological censorship, is I believe the reason why the number of vital new productions on the Moscow stage is not larger.

The foreigner in Moscow was entitled to buy at the "Diplomatic Shop" a ration of clothing, shoes and toilet articles considerably larger than any one could obtain in England at that time.

In food the correspondent got the same ration as an ambassador. For breakfast, two eggs either fresh or "Americanski," a pat of butter, some cheese, tea and about a pound of bread: for lunch, soup, one slice of meat or fish and a distinctly small portion of vegetables followed by a rather ornate "Pirojni" or cream cake, of which only a few hundred were made in the whole city each day, and a glass of tea or black coffee. For supper there was usually cold sausages, another Pirojni and tea. At every meal you had more

bread than you could eat. You either gave the surplus to the waiter as a tip or else took it upstairs to give to the maids or to your secretary, particularly if she had a family, for Russian children eat an enormous amount of bread.

Your mornings were usually spent in battling through all the Russian papers with your secretary, the early afternoon in writing your daily "story" and often the rest of the afternoon in shepherding it through the censorship and the post office. Then you would try to snatch a little exercise before it got dark—usually a hasty walk around the Kremlin, though the more ambitious battled in crowded buses to get out to Sparrow Hills, from which Napoleon obtained his first view of Moscow and where the only tolerable ski-ing was to be had. When you went to the front the normal daily programme was scrapped except for the news agencies, who were allowed to keep two men in Moscow to keep the wheels turning.

In the depth of winter, with the city deep in snow and an oppressive grey sky hanging over you with hardly a glimpse of the sun for weeks at a time, this life could be deeply depressing. Perhaps it was fortunate that vodka was scarce. Otherwise there might have been more bacchic casualties than there actually were. Sometimes you felt remote from the war. Moscow was never raided and there was far less evidence of past raids than in London. Sometimes you felt you were shirking, working-out your particular war in a safe hotel with a rather patchy diet, maybe, but still a very favoured person—theatre tickets when you wanted them, liquor and cigarettes when there were any to be had. Definitely enjoying the smoothest life which it was possible for the hospitable Russian people to give you. Then the English papers would arrive, months late, and you would realise the tremendous interest there was at home not only in the Eastern Front but in every aspect of Russian life, and you realised that after all there was a big job to be done in the Soviet Union in the third year of the Patriotic War. My daily dispatches were republished in America, South Africa, New Zealand and India: the articles were syndicated in Canada, Australia, Switzerland and Sweden.

Russian hospitality is indeed a striking thing. It means that if you are a guest the ordinary rules of life are suspended in your favour. I used to be amazed at the lack of envy we aroused among Russians living in the hotel, although it was obvious that the foreigners were being treated far better than even distinguished

Russians, occupying the best rooms as a matter of course and getting far more to eat. If you crossed the street in the wrong place, becoming liable for a "ticket" from a Militia Man, you had only to say you were a foreigner and the fine would be remitted. Get drunk and bawl your way down Gorki Street, and the police, hearing foreign overtones, no matter how strident, would merely look the other way. Unless you were a Japanese, of course. Then the sequel would probably be an enormous fine.

One night the Japanese ambassador's chauffeur got very drunk in his bedroom at the Metropole. We heard him throwing the furniture about and singing at the top of his voice. Just across the passage was the suite of the Japanese military attaché and seated outside the door was a plain clothes man of the N.K.V.D. who never left his charge unguarded, day or night. The manager of the Metropole was summoned and tapped on the door, murmuring that the noise was "Ne Kulturny" (not refined), but the Japanese responded with even wilder whoops, followed by threats that he intended to cut the throats of the two Russian maidens who were evidently spending the evening with him. Thereupon a girl began to scream. Things looked desperate. The N.K.V.D. man was appealed to but he refused to budge an inch. Quite properly, he said his job was to guard the Japanese attaché and he could not leave his post on what might prove to be just a dodge to lure him out of range while someone else got into the attaché's room and did a commando job on him. So the manager redoubled his knocks and the two girls inside began to scream like scalded cats. At last the door was broken down. The Japanese chauffeur was disclosed, standing on a table brandishing a knife, while one girl lay in a dead faint on the carpet and the other cowered behind the sofa. The room looked as though an Oklahoma "twister" had whirled through it.

The girls were removed, the Japanese given a sedative and the broken furniture taken away.

Next day the Japanese received a bill for "breakages" of 15,000 roubles. Let us say, £300. The mistake he made was in being born a Jap: the peril of Yellow Imperialism is quite well recognised in Russia.

Had he been English or American, I am almost persuaded he could have got away with it.

The Metropole was not quite so raffish as it looked, although a gently nurtured Russian maiden would think twice before visiting

anybody who lived there. The place has a naughty name, dating back to the days of Czarist officers. In the play "Kremlin Chimes" which runs at the Arts Theatre, the heroine's mother is not so much shocked that she should be going out with a sailor as that she should visit him in the Metropole. ("No nice girl goes there, my dear" . . . and so on).

At this time the rooms with bathrooms had the label "Voda" on the door, to indicate that there was water within, in case of incendiary bombs. A wag inserted the letter "K" in my notice, so that I was troubled a good deal by nocturnal strays coming in and asking if I had any Vodka for sale. Hogarthian incidents were not many, though they "stuck." Most of the keys were interchangeable, with the result that, coming home one midnight from a colleague's birthday party, I entered what I thought was my room, undressed, folded my clothes neatly, was a little put off by the absence of my pyjamas, but nevertheless turned out the light and got into bed. ' Later that night a Red Army colonel and his lady friend entered the room and seemed put out when I objected to their getting into bed with me. My poor Russian folded up on me and they had to call the manager before they could convince me that this was *their* room, that mine was the one next door and that I had no right to pose as the injured party.

Perhaps because of ancient traditions, the poor old battered Metropole, like a lady who has seen better days, was touchy about the proprieties. An individual like an American house detective used to prowl around at night. The rule was "All ladies out by twelve o'clock!" Hearing a sound of revelry from the room of one correspondent, this censorious individual knocked on the door, reminded the convivial comrade of the rule and asked that the lady be put out. An indignant correspondent, correctly clothed, opened the door to protest against the insulting insinuation. How dare the fellow blacken his name, together with that of unspecified Soviet womanhood! Let the room be searched, that all doubt be removed! Searching revealed nothing and with many apologies on the one side and expressions of righteous wrath' on the other, the myrmidon withdrew. Retreating down the corridor, however, he was stopped short by a peal of girlish laughter. He doubled back, insisted on making a second search. This time he did not overlook the french windows. And when he drew back the long velvet curtains, there stood revealed in the embrasure a very nude young lady. . . .

Middle-class adherents of Communism must face up to this close analysis of self: "Can it be that I am Left Wing because I would rather be king of that particular dunghill than live half-way down the existing one?"

Few, if any, of the foreign correspondents were Communists, though many developed a considerable regard and respect for the Soviet system. But the Russian practice of bestowing special favours upon foreigners did give rise to the danger that one might acquire a *de haut en bas* attitude. The plain fact was that, although we lived very plainly by peace-time standards in the West, in the Soviet Union at war we were right at the top of the tree. The foreign correspondent in his well-pressed uniform or his English lounge-suit and well-built shoes was a figure of extraordinary distinction in war-time Moscow. Quite simply, people would turn round and look at you in the street. Rather as though Mr. Robert Montgomery were to alight from his car and go for a stroll down the Mile End Road. The stark simplicity of most people's lives at that time made the well-equipped foreigner stand out a mile. No credit to us—it merely meant we had passed through Cairo or some other non-belligerent place where the frills of life were still to be had. But it could dangerously inflate the ego. It was a queer experience, after practising one's profession in New York or Brisbane, where one journalist is just like any other white-collared citizen, to come to a country where one was treated as a cross between an ambassador, a popular novelist and a film star with a dangerous temperament.

Yet I don't think it was entirely this pleasant ballooning of self-importance which made the Moscow air so vital for us.

How to define the pull of Moscow—most pregnant among those who dislike the place, yet long to return after leaving?

Physically such an unattractive town, it is never dull in the way that London can be dull, on a Sunday afternoon or a wet evening. You feel that the place has elemental qualities, that it is never still. It is like living in the centre of a beehive: the pleasant hum of constructive activity never ceases. There is always something going on, something open. It is ugly, paint-starved and overworked but it is a Machine for Living in; and you feel that this machine is running, freely, at its own tremendous pace because there are no old restrictive fingers gripping the controls.

My own home is the eighteenth century and that which stems

from it. Picture me on a Trafalgar balcony reading *A Sentimental Journey* or thumbing through a piece of Crébillon while the others are at cards. The life of the country house once seemed to me more important than anything else in this world. But now I feel that not even the life of the country cottage matters any more. The life that is led in THIS city of Moscow is formative for the whole of our world. I can, of course, only say what Moscow is now, in this month of February, 1944, for it changes so rapidly that by the time these words are being read it may have taken another great turn for the better, or for the worse.

Many people here earn only £8 a month, at my rate of exchange. For them life is far more direct and simple than we in the west can conceive of: it is a question of a dry bed, three meals a day, warm enough clothing and one good pair of boots. The values are soldierly values: they have been so ever since the first Five Year Plan. It was only in 1928 that the nation got back to the level of production of Czarist Russia in 1913 (with the exception of electric power). So great had been the dislocation of World War 1 and the civil war. And now World War 2 has thrown the country off its stride again, thrown it back probably by the extent of one whole Five Year Plan, so far as consumer goods and the amenities of life are concerned, although this war has been a Locomotive of History in speeding the development of heavy industry. To-day we are certainly seeing Russia at its worst; and outwardly it is as reach-me-down and rattletrap a looking country as any English or American Russophobe ever maintained at home. Of course it always was absurd to compare Russia with the West. It should be compared with the kindred countries on its doorstep—Poland, Rumania, or even Persia—a comparison from which it emerges most successfully. The shops in the west end of Teheran are filled with beautiful things: the trouble is that the Persian people can't afford to buy them. Moscow's shops have almost nothing in them: but put a consignment of novelties in to-morrow and they would be bought up at once. There is never any lack of purchasing power in Russia, but there has always been a chronic shortage of goods. Slice out of Bucharest or Warsaw the quarters containing the few good middle-class flats and restaurants, and you would have a city like Moscow—but without Moscow's magnificent theatres or her subway or sports stadia.

As for the Polish or Rumanian countryside, despite the chateaux and the shooting-lodges, both look poorer and in fact *are* poorer

than the Russian landscape because the Russian land under collectivisation is far more efficiently farmed.

Moscow is a poor city and looks it: it is a city without rich people. All those decorative but fundamentally unproductive people who *make* the West End of a Western city, who fill the fashionable shops and restaurants, have simply ceased to exist in Russia. And the rewards which the Socialist state gives to its most distinguished citizens are so modest as to appear to Western eyes almost non-existent. I think it is true to say that there is not a distinguished man in Moscow who has more than five rooms for himself and his family, however large. One gets weary of hearing from foreigners in Moscow about the shocking inequalities which have sprung up in Soviet society, when these privileged foreigners find life so simple themselves that they import all the clothing and tinned goods they can from abroad.

"How *cruel*," I heard it said, "to put dummy food in shop windows when the poor people know there is nothing inside."

Actually the practice of putting *papier maché* loaves and hams and bowls of caviare in the window dates from Czarist days, with a view to not exposing fresh food to flies and dust.

I have never yet met a Communist who did not admit that the Soviet living-standard as a whole is lower than in Britain and America. The idea that Russian Communists are complacent about what has been achieved is exclusively a foreign idea. American films which clearly show the comparative luxury of the American workers' family are shown in Russia without arousing counter-revolutionary feelings. Why? Because the Russian has been told, and he believes, that he too will one day reach the pleasing standard depicted by Hollywood (though he is not such a fool as to suppose that this celluloid standard really applies all over America.)

The warm, cosy clannishness of universal poverty makes Moscow a better and a more hopeful place to live in than the poor quarters of a Western city. Where there are no rich, there is no social envy. The Muscovite ideal is for the whole city to pull itself up by its bootstraps, as it were—not for one quarter, or one section of the population, to be beautified and modernised while the balance must await a problematical future. This policy of *all-round* advance, of progress as a city and not merely street by street, is most strictly carried out and it is this policy which explains the slowness with which the modernisation of Moscow proceeds.

Three-room flats of identical standard are built whether they are to house engine-drivers or stars of the movie industry. I asked Karo Alabian, a leading architect, why bigger and better apartments were not being built: he said it was because the three-room unit was the best that could be put *within the reach of all* at the present time. And certainly, in a city built to house two millions into which nearly five millions are jammed to-day, with thousands of families living in one room, and with the natural increase of population 200,000 in every year, it would be a mockery to erect large and beautiful flats for the few while the many had to go on living like this.

It was not affectation, but shrewd psychology, that prompted Stalin, before he donned his marshal's uniform, to wear always a semi-military blouse and cap and a pair of top-boots. You can usually spot the Party worker or the factory director by this uniform in the street to-day. This dress symbolises that ever since the revolution the country has been *fighting* for socialism: the Bolsheviks never made the mistake of the Western socialists in suggesting that the millennium could be just legislated into existence. It had to be fought for, and is being fought for, every day and in every department of life. The members of the Party were, and still are, soldiers who had volunteered—liable to be sent anywhere at a moment's notice, taught to put duty above all personal considerations or desire for the Good Life. And the people they led were told that only by living the hard way, as soldiers, for as long as a generation was there any chance of their aspirations being realised. In the majority the Russian people have accepted this premise. Even though the Communist party could offer them nothing but sweat and privation during the first two Plans at least, they followed the Party Line, comforted in the assurance that things were going *according to Plan*, that a *System* was at work. The knowledge that all the efforts of the governing party were being directed towards rebuilding the lives of the whole people according to a definite, methodical Plan has been, and is, a most powerful solvent in human relationships in Russia. The Plan might proceed slowly, its fruits might seem meagre at first and disappointing later, but the majestic pulse of the Plan entered into each life every day. Nobody escaped its rhythm.

We in the West talk of the Capitalist System. But surely there is no such thing. In England our ancient monarchy is shored up by a democratic franchise and by a parliament which does no more

than set the ring and hold the stop-watch and the towel while the practitioners of Free Enterprise slog it out upon the sawdust, with Profit as the prize. That is no *system*. It is a Free-for-All, with some of the more brutal "holds" now barred by humanitarian legislation. I believe with Robert Briffault that we modern English live under a mere hodge-podge of usages handed down from our tribal beginnings and that we may spare ourselves the trouble of trying to interpret systematically, logically, that in which neither system nor logic resides. But not so the Russians. They possess the incalculable inner strength of living under a System which—though it commit many mistakes or even be responsible for injustices and hardships—nevertheless holds up before the people aims which not even a Hapsburg or a Bourbon could deny to be beneficent in themselves. When a man is unjustly imprisoned (as unhappily occurred in unnumbered cases during the Purge) the Russian community does not blame the Party or repudiate the Communist ideal, however imperfectly it is being realised at the moment. It condemns the human failure or incompetence of individual fellow-citizens. In that respect Communism has much of the extraordinary resilience of Christianity. A cardinal or a People's Commissar behave disgracefully? Sad, but not faith-destroying: the next church service or party meeting will be just as well attended as before.

We Anglo-Saxons would be foolish not to try to understand the strength which the Soviet system has imparted to the Russian people and to see what we can gain from their experience. For the past 50 years at least successive British governments have been battling against an ever-rising wave of discontent, putting up palliative after palliative against class hatreds which die down momentarily, only to flare up again because they are fundamental in our society. Even the most hidebound Englishmen must sometimes ask themselves why it is that English workers are always "giving trouble" while Russian workers seem relatively contented, even though their lives are harder: why they seem to bend all their efforts to increasing production, instead of demanding higher wages and shorter hours. To talk of Stalin as the "Red Czar" and his Party as a "despotic oligarchy" is just playing with words. To any one who lives a while in Russia it becomes obvious that the Russian masses believe in Stalin and his followers with a fervour which no British government, even Churchill "in our darkest hour," has ever commanded. The Communist party is not a

“Government” in our sense: it is not “they,” against our “we.” It is a part of our very lives—of our job in office or factory, of the committee that runs our apartment-house or club.

Assume for a moment that the Russian masses are mistaken in their trust: assume that they will never win the Communism they dream of or that their economy does not succeed in overtaking the economies of the West. Is not the very fact that they believe in this dream and meanwhile are *contented* in the belief that their way of life is the correct one—is that not an unique development in political science, anywhere in the world to-day? In what other country in the world do the people hew out their own future with a like confidence and satisfaction?

Imagine if a British or American politician possessed the secret of *satisfying* the masses as Stalin and his followers have done—not materially and now, but in the sphere of theory and belief—would not the whole face of the Western world be utterly different?

To make an end of the constant carping and nagging between one interest and another, one class and another—what a dream of bliss for any Western politician! But that is impossible so long as one party representing those who Have and the other those who Have Not are continually struggling for power.

I do not wonder that after the Teheran Conference Winston Churchill is reported to have expressed his envy for the political security which Stalin enjoyed—which dictators like Hitler or Franco have never won. The reason is, of course, that Stalin is much more than a politician: he is a political scientist and the leader of a Humanistic religion and an instrument through which the most far-reaching plan of human effort and behaviour is being carried through. Stalin, unlike the Pope, is not infallible: but he is protected from error by a great body of humanist doctrine, constantly enriched by experience, which is accepted by the modern Russians just as fully as Christianity dominated mediæval Christendom.

You may reproach Stalin with many errors of judgment or with unnecessary harshness in carrying through his programme, but the immense strength of this man and of his party is that you cannot assert that he represents any *interest* which conflicts with, or is elevated above, the interests of the nation as a whole. Stalin looks, and is, a class-less individual. Shrewd judges of men like Lord Beaverbrook have been quite unable to “place” him; he is not a “gentleman” neither is he a “working-man,” though born

in a worker's family; he is not an "intellectual" nor has he any academic attainments. He is a rather Shavian character: his outlook is scientific and his genius seems to consist of nothing more (but how much that is!) than an all-embracing Common Sense. His party bases itself upon the Workers and Peasants, which is to say, upon 98 per cent of the entire population (allowing 2 per cent for pure "intellectuals") and you could never accuse him, as one might accuse any Western statesman at one time or another, of representing the interests of landowners or rentiers or business men or mineral owners or monopolists or exploiters of cheap labour overseas, because these classes simply have no being in Russia. Modern Russia is governed according to a theory and a set of principles. When you read the debates within the Party some years ago you find that Stalin was criticised, not as our politicians are for failing to cure unemployment or for favouring the "bosses" against the workers, or vice versa, but for alleged deviations from the "Line," the guide to practice and conduct that had been laid down by Lenin, and by Marx before him.

You may say that our politicians aim at "the greatest good of the greatest number." Maybe they do, but they govern empirically—on the Gold Standard, off it, back on to it again: subsidies here, quotas there, here a cartel, there a government-aided monopoly, bounties for farmers, tuppence off tea, easy credit for cheapjack house-builders.

But in Russia life proceeds according to plan. "Nothing happens here without being planned," my secretary told me. And that was why even in the third year of war and amid discomforts and shortages of every kind, you had a feeling of harmony. You felt that Russia was in tune with her self.

Looking out of my Moscow Window again after four months' absence from Russia I notice some ameliorations in life which are directly due to the fact that since February, 1943, the Red Army had advanced 870 miles from Stalingrad to Lutsk, or well over half-way from Stalingrad to Berlin. For one thing, there is no real black-out any more: pinpoint lights give ample illumination. Unsightly camouflage has been removed from many buildings: the Catherine Palace in the Kremlin looks like a palace again and not like a forest. Moscow University has been repainted and the offices of the Council of People's Commissars now gleams white like Portland stone, the camouflage withdrawn. Still, it will take

many million tons of paint to restore Soviet towns to real decency again.

The people look much more cheerful than when I left. Why not, when every day the news gets better and better? They seem more smartly dressed too, perhaps because every Russian spends more on the essential winter wardrobe than on summer things and women with very small incomes will sacrifice much for a fur coat. But victory is not yet reflected upon the dinner table and until the next harvest is gathered in the Ukraine at least, the basic life of the Russians will remain far more Spartan than ours. Here is the food situation in February, 1944:

Every one receives a basic ration according to four categories—Workers, Employees (which means all except manual workers), Children and Dependents (meaning the aged and any who for one reason or another are not engaged in productive work). Collective farmers live off their own produce, without ration cards. Workers receive between 550 and 650 grammes of bread daily, employees 450, dependents and children 300.

Monthly rations, all in grammes, are:

	<i>Workers.</i>	<i>Employees.</i>	<i>Dependents.</i>	<i>Children.</i>
Cereals	2000	1500	1000	1200
Meat	2200	1200	600	600
Sugar	500	300	100	300
Fats	800	400	200	400

All categories get 400 grammes of salt, 25 grammes of tea or 150 of coffee and three boxes of matches a month.

In addition to this extremely meagre basic ration, many offices and factories have an "auxiliary farm" run by the workers which produces pork, vegetables, milk, etc., which are sold to the workers at minimum prices. These farms have developed so much that the State now takes a quota from them for national distribution and in return the State Catering Administration provides in, or adjacent to every factory and office, a restaurant where one or more hot meals are available daily against the surrender of food coupons. The more efficient the farm, the better will its co-operative owners eat for as can be seen it is not the basic ration that is important so much as the manner in which it is supplemented.

Personal allotments are now owned by 90 per cent of all Muscovites and provide a source of winter vegetables. American

cheese or powdered egg often appears on the meat ration. In season, a little fruit is distributed on spare coupons at the back of the ration book. Clothes are extremely scarce, shoes even more so; they are distributed on the basis of extreme need. Cigarettes are also rare. Soap is very difficult: only the public baths have a good supply. Over and above these basic rates, special categories like Peoples Commissars, scientists, professors, artists and actors and some highly qualified workers receive extra rations which may bring their intake up to the level of the fighting services or to that of foreign diplomats, who receive the highest of all.

LENINGRAD

WHEN IRIS AND I went to pay our respects to Comrade Korsh at the Foreign Office, we found him wearing the grey uniform with silvered epaulettes and cross palms on the cap that had just been introduced for the whole Foreign Service. Korsh had been press attaché in London and knew just what the foreign correspondents needed but unfortunately he was about to go down to Kiev to organise the Ukrainian Republic's Foreign Office under the new law permitting each republic to conduct its own foreign relations. So it was really hail and farewell.

Our conducting officer for Leningrad turned out to be Dangulov, a dashing Circassian with a poetic style of speech. ("Ah, how she radiates moral purity!" said he of one woman present). He had a good knowledge of how the British and American newspapers are run, which raised him far above the general run of Press Department officials.

The Press Department tended to be the "Coventry" of the Foreign Office, to which misfits were sent. Last year its chief had been an old engineer, entirely new to diplomacy and without the slightest press experience. Before being blown up on a mine during one of our trips to the Ukrainian front, poor fellow, he had certainly done his best and it was not his fault that he was wildly unsuited to the job. But Dangulov had written a book about the R.A.F. and been a war correspondent on *Red Star*, specialising in air matters. So it was a treat to have him around.

The battle which led to the raising of the siege of Leningrad began on January 15th. It was not until the evening of February 6th that we left Moscow, but in view of the fact that the railway to Leningrad was still operating shakily, that the Finns were still holding firm only 15 miles from the city and that priority had to be given to rushing food to the starving population, this delay in getting to the scene did not seem to us too bad. Nearly thirty correspondents, including a Spaniard, a couple of Czechs and Homer Smith, who represents negro papers in America, were in the party, which had the air more of a Sunday School outing than

a journey to the front. This was the first day that a normal passenger train had been run to Leningrad. We all jammed into a second-class sleeping-car—Iris fell in with a Russian woman journalist and I with Maurice Hindus and with Ronnie Matthews, of the *Daily Herald*.

The train was labelled "Leningrad Express" and an excited crowd had gathered to see it off. We were excited, too. It was grand to be on the move only 48 hours after arriving in Moscow: this was Iris's first trip in Russia and neither of us had ever seen Leningrad before except in the romantic theatrical sets of Tchaikovsky's opera *Queen of Spades*. The Nicholas Station itself is a stage setting. Unchanged since the days of Tolstoy, you can almost chart the spot on the wooden platform where Vronsky, going to meet his mother arriving from St. Petersburg, must have encountered Anna Karenina. Farther up the line, you pass the country station where Anna, clutching the red handbag to her breast, threw herself under the train. All through the journey—even when Hindus was giving us one of his 500 dollar lectures on Russia for nothing and Ronnie, satanic in black silk pyjamas, was passing the vodka and defending the foreign policy of the Pope against universal disapprobation—I kept seeing Anna and Vronsky in the corridor.

There was no food on the train, of course, but we had brought bread and tinned things and the *Provodnik* chopped up huge logs of wood at the end of the coach with which to keep us warm, and kept the samovar churning for tea. We travelled all that night and all the next day. The snow-covered landscape was quite featureless, but the forests stood out in bronze and silver and ebony as the pale sun played among the trees. At one point we got quite close to Leningrad on the main line, then we came to a break, were shunted in the opposite direction and began to travel in a wide loop to the north over a temporary track. During that first day we got to Tikhvin and got out and walked through the half-empty town for half an hour while the engine took on more wood.

One is apt to suppose that the Soviet railways are not very efficient. But now I changed my mind. It was evident that the rail system was being restored remarkably fast. Our train, being for passengers only, travelled very slow but freight trains had priority over us and we waited on many a spur-line while they went roaring by. We passed creakingly over single tracks which had obviously been laid at great speed through the woods: you

could see where the trees had been knocked down by bulldozers to clear a path. The wood-burning locomotives hauled immense loads. I counted freight trains of 90 and 100 wagons. There seemed an endless supply of wagons of 20 or 30 tons, and some of even 50 and 60 tons. Beyond Leningrad I was even to see a train steaming through a minefield. The immediate track had been cleared but the advance was going so fast that the sappers had not yet cleared the surrounding area.

As we neared Leningrad the demolitions became worse, and for the last 10 miles the train just limped into the city, like a rickety old tram that is about to come off the lines at any moment. Before the war the "Red Arrow" express used to do Moscow-Leningrad in about 10 hours; even the Empress Catherine, in her day, did the journey in 24 hours by dint of killing relays of horses and driving after dark along a special track illuminated with blazing barrels all the way. We took 38 hours to cover the same distance.

It was several degrees below zero when we stepped out of the train at 7 a.m. on February 8th. The station was decorated with huge red Victory banners and life-size portraits of Stalin and Zhdanov. The latter, who succeeded the murdered Kirov as Party Boss of the City, is almost as big a figure here as Stalin himself. Thick-necked, with a glossy black head and large penetrating eyes, he looks rather like a middle-aged French *matinée* idol but he always wears Party uniform, works very long hours and more than any one man is responsible for the successful defence of Leningrad for over two years. His headquarters were in the Smolny Institute, the former school for noble maidens, which was Lenin's headquarters during the revolution.

The square outside the station was deserted in the thin morning light except for a gang of women working among the ruins of a large building opposite. It had been a church and they were stacking the bricks for use in reconstruction elsewhere. We got into a bus and drove off down the Nevsky Prospekt in the direction of the Astoria Hotel. Alexander Werth, who lived in St. Petersburg until he was sixteen and had been there for a few days while the Germans were still in the suburbs, was kept busy answering strings of questions. Our first impression was that the city was not so badly damaged as might have been thought, because most of the destruction was due to shells which had knocked bits off the massive buildings but had not brought them down as bombs

would have done. In the dim light, with the snow covering many a ruined corner, the city looked magnificent. And what a magnificent city it is! The first great capital to be laid out according to a master plan, it is not merely the finest city in Russia but architecturally it must rank with Paris among the finest in the world. Gloomy? Well, yes, the immense grey façades are rather overwhelming. But what a petty provincial hole does Moscow appear beside it! Many of the streets are 100 feet wide; the Nevsky itself is nearly three miles long; the palaces built along the canals, into which drip avenues of old gnarled trees, are beautifully proportioned; and the landscaping puts London to shame. As soon as we had dropped our bags in the hotel, we went out into the streets to see everything for ourselves. What distances, what spires, what vast harmonious buildings! The Admiralty is nearly 1400 feet long, the Winter Palace nearly 500 feet. Some of the palaces are cream and white, others Adams green, others are blue. They make festivals of colour against the snow.

The historic centre of the city along the Neva had been only superficially damaged—the Admiralty, the Hermitage, St. Isaacs Cathedral, the Winter Palace, the Fortress of Peter and Paul and the famous statue of Peter the Great on horseback are safe. But barricades are still up in the streets, and when we went into the southern suburbs we found they were utterly ruined. There were very few people in the streets. People were not yet being allowed to come back. As much food as possible was being sent into the city and the daily ration was now the highest in Russia. For there had been real starvation in Leningrad and during the first winter, before the ice road across Lake Ladoga had been opened, the terrible yet inevitable concomitant of siege had also been known—cannibalism. Scores of thousands had died of starvation—that much was known and had been published. The other matter was only whispered about. But I heard of it from enough people to leave no doubt in my mind that it occurred.

There was one Englishman in Leningrad during most of the siege. He was Ted Wincot, who had been involved in the Mutiny at Invergordon while serving in the Royal Navy. After this he came to Russia, like many another political exile, and at the beginning of Russia's war, joined the Red Fleet. During the first siege winter he was ordered to Leningrad. He had been something of an author since coming to Russia and so, on his first night off duty, strolled round to the Leningrad Writers' Club to see what

was on. He found the stairway dirty and deserted and nobody answered when he called out, "Is any one at home?" In the club library he found several elderly gentlemen seated in the chairs. One or two more literary folk were lying on the floor, dead. On closer inspection Wincot found that several of the seated figures were dead too. Others were merely so listless from starvation that they did not move.

Then the former British sailor—doubtless muttering to himself, "Blimey, this won't do"—set to to make things more ship-shape. He hauled the dead bodies downstairs and stacked them in the yard, where they rapidly froze stiff and so remained in a merciful state of preservation until the snow thawed. He took water and a towel (there was of course no soap) and himself washed the starving men who had become too weak to clean themselves; brushed them and dressed them tidily and, returning to his ship, brought what food he could spare to give to the survivors. He then sent a message to the writers of Moscow to tell them that their brethren here were in extremis and in due course help arrived from the capital.

Wincot tells this story in the most matter-of-fact way. It is only one of many that he experienced and I will quote from him no more, for one day he must of course tell the whole story of the siege in a book of his own.

During the first two days we went pretty thoroughly over the battlefield to the south. We drove to Peterhof and Oranienbaum; to Krasnoye Selo, Tsarskoe Selo and Gatchina. Once the bus got stuck in a snowdrift for several hours and we stamped up and down on the road to keep warm. It was 12 degrees below and there was a wind that bit through the heaviest furs. Even "Henry Irving" could not keep it out. It was not unbearably cold. But it was certainly the most intense cold I had ever experienced in my life. One tried to cover up one's face, especially the nose and eyes, and the heaviest socks and fleece-lined boots did not prevent one from losing all sensation in the feet.

Once we came to a road where it seemed that the mines had not been lifted: so we turned back and made a detour of many miles. We had had breakfast about 9 a.m. and kept going all day without food until eight or nine at night. The roads were so bad under snow that one moved very slowly and only by forcing the pace like this could we see what had to be seen.

It was not difficult to reconstruct just how this longest and most appalling siege for many centuries had been lifted. The

battle which broke the siege cost the Germans four divisions and 1000 guns destroyed. The barrage which preceded the Russian attack was the heaviest they had ever laid down until that day.

Although Leningrad had suffered so terribly through those two years, the Red Army remained strong in the city all through that time. The fortress of Kronstadt held in the Gulf of Finland and its garrison was able to spare some of the ten-year supply of stores built up there to send into the city. The Baltic Fleet remained a going concern (especially its submarines) even though its larger ships were tucked away under camouflage in the Neva. But, most marvellous of all, the Red Army held a bridgehead along the Gulf of Finland at Oranienbaum. This was Leningrad's Tobruk. Actually slightly larger in area than the Libyan fortress, it was held with a much smaller garrison because it was covered by the great guns of Kronstadt and on two other fortified islands in the gulf and provisioned by water from Leningrad. When the Russian offensive began on January 15 Oranienbaum played the same role as Tobruk did when the Eighth Army advanced into Libya. Its garrison pushed out to the south-east while from the flat plain just south of Leningrad other troops stormed the German positions around Pulkovo and advanced south-westward, cutting off the Germans at Krasnoye Selo, then linking up with the Oranienbaum men at Kipen, where the four German divisions were trapped and annihilated.

The enemy's key position was the hill known as "the Finnish Redoubt," about 7 miles from Leningrad. I stood on its eminence 150 feet above the plain and looked down, as Hitler looked down in the autumn of 1941, on the golden dome of St. Isaac's and the reddish mass of the Winter Palace and the Putilov works where President Kalinin worked as a young man, and which went on producing war material although it was under fire for 2 years. Snow covered all under a sky of steely grey. You could appreciate the tremendous problem that faced General Govarov in taking this redoubt. The redoubt is about 1 kilometre wide by 3 kilometres deep and about 5000 Germans held its six lines of defence, studded with concrete shelters with steel roofs, which were invisible because they were flush with the ground. The topmost shelter on which I stood housed a periscope which could be pushed up on the very crest of the redoubt.

At 9.20 in the morning of January 15 the Russian attack began. The weather was bad, hence there was little air support, but every

gun for miles around was trained on this redoubt, including all the cannon of Kronstadt. The Russians say that as many as 500,000 shells fell in this area during the battle. Attacking from the plain, where no concealment was possible, the Russians counted on losing 25 per cent of their force. General Maslenikov was in command here and General Fediuninsky at Oranienbaum. Behind the initial objective in each case lay other German fortresses. I went over them all, and they were formidable—Uritsk with its steel forts and its six lines of trenches and wire; Pulkovo, Peterhof, Gatchina and Tsarskoe Selo.

The last three constitute the crowning tragedy of Leningrad. In them are the great palaces of Russia—the Windsor Castle and Hampton Court of the nation. The Russians were obliged to fight over some of their most beautiful and historic sites. If you compare Leningrad with London, you would find to-day St. James's Palace still standing and Mayfair and Westminster not badly damaged; but on the outskirts you would find Windsor lying in ashes, Hampton Court only a shell and Kensington Palace gutted. They showed us a film of Peterhof as it was before, with the great Samson Fountain playing and the flowers blooming on the terraces down to the sea. But standing on the ruined terrace one could scarcely credit it. Rastrelli's gem of baroque art, Peterhof, will never rise again. Only the jagged walls remain. The only part that might be restored are the Czar's stables, where once Field-Marshal Baron Mannerheim of Finland presided as Master of the Horse.

It is the same at Gatchina, the palace built by the mad Czar Paul in Gothic style. The Germans used this as a barracks and, on an upper floor, had an officers' brothel. The custodian of the palace, Vladislav Glinka, a relative of the composer, told me he returned to the palace four hours after the Germans left it, on January 26, to find the place freshly ablaze. From the frozen English Lake he tried to get water to fight the flames, but it was a hopeless task. Slowly the huge building burned out. Now only the walls remain. The gorgeous baroque palace which Rastrelli built at Tsarskoe Selo for Catherine the Great, lies just a frame. Its blue and white façade, almost 1000 feet long, looks all right as you approach it through the park, but when you get close you see that the whole interior has been knocked in and gutted as though by fire. All these palaces were in German occupation for 2 years. Some of their treasures were looted off to Germany but it is to be

feared that the greater part were just broken up piecemeal by the soldiery. The Russians had no time to evacuate much before the Germans arrived.

At Gatchina I trod on fragments of Sèvres vases. Fragments of ceilings painted by masterly hands lay on the charred floor. Candelabra and golden cupids I found under piles of rubble. It was dangerous to try the stairs for time-bombs had been going off.

The Leningrad region as a whole is a sight to make the angels weep. The country along the Gulf of Finland, once lined with the summer palaces of the grand dukes and carefully preserved by the Soviets, is devastated like Flanders in the last war. For miles you see not a single tree. No bird sings. There is no place for a bird to rest. Nothing but leafless stumps remain—blasted off close to the earth by the artillery.

I am not normally sensitive to destruction of art treasures, *vis-à-vis* destruction of human life. It is a monstrous thing to risk a soldier's life for the sake of saving a monument. But Russia has so few great monuments. And all the treasures of her eighteenth century are gathered around Leningrad. The masterpieces of Cameron and Rastrelli lay right in Hitler's path when he lunged madly at Leningrad. And alas, they have just been wiped off the face of the earth. Baranov, the city architect, who came round with us, spoke of "restoring everything in time." But that is pathetic wishful-thinking. Where can another Rastrelli be found to-day? Who will build afresh the agate chamber of Catherine the Great at Tsarskoe Selo or the bedroom of the Empress Marie Alexandrovna with its walls of violet glass and its parquet floor inlaid with mother of pearl? Who will reconstruct the blue and gold of the Lapis Lazuli Chamber?

There are minefields miles square hidden beneath the snow. I saw Red Army girls with dogs trained to locate the mine cases. The only trees near the city are the imitation ones with which the Germans lined their roads, to mask the traffic moving along them. The blue railway coaches in which the last Tsar signed his abdication still stand in the grounds of Peterhof but all the contents are looted.

It was pathetic to see the efforts being made to restore a measure of decency to the ravaged towns. In Gatchina some doctors from Leningrad were bustling about trying to clean up the houses. The stench and disorder among the gutted buildings, where no water was available, remained indescribable. Komsomol boys and girls

were helping to clear the railway; peasants were burying dead horses which lay around with their stomachs inflated like balloons. Soldiers fixed up radios in the streets so that people could once again hear the voice of Moscow.

On this front there has just occurred another of those astonishing feats of heroism inspired by Private Alexander Matrosov, who last summer was posthumously made a Hero of the Soviet Union for deliberately sacrificing his life for his comrades. Prokopi Avrankov, a sergeant aged only 20, crawled up to a pillbox which had been pinning his company to the ground and threw a grenade into it. The machine-guns within stopped firing for the moment; but as soon as the company got up to advance again, it fired once more. Thereupon Avrankov hurled himself into the embrasure to smother the machine-gun with his own body. He died under the hail of bullets. For an instant his comrades stood transfixed, overcome by what they had seen. Then someone shouted "Forward!" the men pushed on and the German position was overrun. Avrankov's bullet-ridden body was buried by his comrades and no doubt his mother will now receive the highest honours the nation can bestow.

There had been rumours of rocket-guns being used against Leningrad but I could find no trace of any, and none of the artillery officers we met believed the story. We saw several 210 millimetre siege guns which had been firing on the city from 10 miles out and the sites of scores of other heavy guns which had been taken away. It was astonishing that any city could take such a pounding for so long and still survive. Of course Leningrad is in no way comparable to Stalingrad which, being so much smaller, was left without one stone upon another. On the whole Leningrad is not so badly damaged as London was by the blitzes, illustrating once again that in modern war a great city whose citizens are lion-hearted is one of the hardest military objectives to subdue.

After two days spent touring the battlefields and returning to the Astoria Hotel in Leningrad at night, we turned our attention to the city itself. It was about 10 degrees below zero out on the frozen heathlands to the south: we would breakfast at nine in the morning and return for a "lunch" about eight o'clock at night, eating nothing in between. We would then see some Leningrad notable or other and have a third meal, a "supper" about midnight.

The scale of entertainment, as usual on our trips, was overwhelming, but it was somewhat embarrassing to eat behind a screen in the hotel dining-room, so that the rest of the guests should not see how lavishly we were being entertained. Most of the glass in the Astoria was out and the windows were boarded up but the central heating was going although there was only cold water in the taps. Nearly all the lavatories had been shaken loose by the bombardment so that sanitation was on that happy go lucky, hit or miss level which does not seriously worry Russians but which vexes the sensitive American or English spirit.

There was no doubt that the Leningraders felt very bitterly about the Finns, holding them responsible for a great part of their sufferings. They were especially nauseated by the Finnish propaganda in America which depicts Finland as a mild, democratic, debt-paying little Utopia that never harmed any one. The Leningraders who suffered for $2\frac{1}{2}$ years under Finnish shelling knew better and having cleaned up the Germans to the south, they were now determined to break the Finnish menace on the north. They regarded the Finns very much as we would regard the southern Irish had de Valera permitted the Germans to land in Eire and wage war against us with their own active support. The fact that Finland is small seems to them no excuse. As Hitler's accomplices the Finns at one time tied up fifteen Russian divisions and at this time their lines were still 15 miles from the centre of Leningrad.

Touring the city with Baranov I saw no little evidence of havoc wrought by Finnish shells, apart from that caused by purely German shelling from the south. The district around the Finland Station had been badly smashed up by shells fired from the Karelian Isthmus and the port area was as badly damaged as any part of the city. Whole blocks there were wiped out by fire from the north. Aircraft coming from Finnish aerodromes also did much damage especially in the Students' Garden City which used to house 6000 members of the Leningrad Polytechnic. Huge blocks of flats in the modern style were ruined: quite half the Polytechnic area had been destroyed.

Since the Russians attacked at Oranienbaum the Finns are reported to have withdrawn their big guns back some way towards Terijoki, but Leningrad is still closer to them than Dover is to the Germans at Calais, and this situation cannot be permitted to last for Leningrad wants to get back to normal and clean itself up.

Baranov told me that the replanning of Leningrad began even while the siege was on because the authorities found that work on reconstruction was one of the best moral antidotes to the appalling conditions of the blockade. Artists were employed painting bits of canvas to disguise the damage to buildings, partly to deceive the enemy, partly to keep up "morale." You could see bogus Corinthian columns and imitation caryatids stuck up on ravaged façades. In the areas blasted by shelling, preliminary work on turning them into parks was begun. Leningrad before the war was about 80 per cent built up. Baranov's new plans provide for a city 22 miles across from north to south and about 18 from east to west to house a population about the same as before—3½ millions—but in an area which would be only 30 per cent built up. Thousands of Leningraders who moved with their factories to the Urals are likely to settle there after the war.

Baranov estimated that for 2½ years there had been shelling virtually every day. From 250 to 1000 shells struck the city each day. Over the whole period 100,000 shells fell in the city and caused damage, aside from those which did not explode. Of 15 million square metres of living space in the city about 3 million had been destroyed.

Going through the Winter Palace and the Hermitage I found that 80 tons of smashed glass had been removed from there. A shell had crashed through the Hall of Crests, next to the Throne Room, and done considerable damage below. The total damage to the Hermitage and Palace was estimated at one billion roubles, but all the pictures had been removed and most of the furniture was safe in the basements below. Most of the elaborate gold frames had been left on the walls, only the canvases being removed. This gave the palace an odd, looted look. The damage in the St. Andrew's Chamber and in some of the other great halls was light and could be repaired. The Winter Palace—so massive that it withstood the use of field artillery during the revolution—survived all this German shelling also. But the far more beautiful and artistically important palaces in the country to the south had all been fought over, and it looked to me that they had gone for good. . . .

The celebrated Mariinsky Theatre, the home of the old Imperial Ballet, presented a horrid sight after being hit by a half-ton bomb and some 19 shells. I tripped through the auditorium, into which the vast crystal candelabra had fallen and been smashed into little pieces, and walked on the stage where Pavlova and Nijinsky had

danced and where the great Galina Ulanova made her debut in Soviet times. The auditorium was enveloped in wooden scaffolding. Three hundred soldiers and civilians were trying to restore the building in time for a reopening on May Day, but it was pathetic to see their efforts.* The magnificent white and gold scroll-work really needed the attentions of skilled craftsmen, who simply were not available. Horny-handed Tommies were trying to stick on elaborate pieces of ormolu. The interior walls were being rebuilt with more haste than skill: the mortar was being slapped on so thin that it looked as though the bricks must work loose. The City Soviet was spending four million roubles on the theatre. It had priority over any other work of reconstruction because it was rightly felt that this theatre, now called after Kirov, of all the public buildings in the city was the one which would be capable of giving most pleasure to the people after all the sufferings they had endured.

The Admiralty received six bomb hits but was virtually unharmed. Already you could see steeplejacks trying to straighten the tall gilded spire, which had got knocked a trifle out of line by blast.

The Smolny Institute and its glorious baroque church were undamaged. The Smolny was hidden by the most elaborate camouflage I have ever seen. Standing fifty yards away from it in broad daylight, I would not have known what lay before me if Baranov had not told me. It looked like some enormous tramway shed shrouded by trees.

The Frunze district was badly smashed by bombing, mostly incendiaries, but of the city's bridges none was harmed though the Germans tried repeatedly to hit them. Their bombing was mostly from 15 to 20 thousand feet and was so erratic that one bomb killed an elephant in the Zoo while a beautiful terrace of houses nearby was unharmed. The bombing came early in the siege. There were few big raids after December, 1941, one reason probably being that the German infantry were so close to the vital factory areas around the Putilov works that it would have been difficult to bomb that area from the necessary altitude without risking damage in the Germans' own lines. The Kazan Cathedral had bombs on its roof but the gold-domed St. Isaac's on which I gazed through the one good pane of glass in my hotel room was barely hurt. Around the Smolny the damage was so great that a new

*It finally re-opened in September.

square will be built on the ruined houses. So that camouflage cannot have entirely deceived the Germans as to where the central brain of the Leningrad defence was situated. Another new park $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles long will be laid out through the damaged areas on the north bank of the Neva, opposite the Winter Palace.

I went into the Smolny to see the chairman of the City Soviet, Peter Popkov, who holds a position equivalent to that of mayor, except that in addition he is the chief of all the real estate and business ventures which are run by any Soviet municipality. In fact, he is a very big business executive indeed. He is forty-four. He looked very weary, but was neatly dressed in a blue serge suit with white shirt and blue tie. (Leningraders on the whole pride themselves on being smarter, more "kulturny," than the people of Moscow.)

"I want to say a big Russian ' Spassiba ' (thanks)," he said, "to the people in England and America who in our darkest hour sent us gifts and messages that made us feel we were not alone. That hour was truly dark. During the first, bad winter the ration for workers was only 250 grammes of bread daily. Children and dependents got 125 grammes. Thirty per cent of this bread was substitute. To this wretched ration we were able to add nothing—no sugar, fats, cereals—just nothing at all. Water and electricity failed in most private houses and we could give a little fuel only to children's homes and hospitals. So it was cold and dark all the while. We none of us knew whether we would be alive on the morrow. About 5000 were killed and 15,000 wounded among the civilians, mostly by shells. The worst bombing was in August, 1941, when 500 tons fell in one day. Yet I say with particular pride that there was never a question of any section of the people needing to have their morale nursed. Theatres and cinemas ran all the while, of course, to keep up our spirits."

The mayor added that during the winter of 1941 a great part of the population were evacuated over the ice across Lake Ladoga, including nearly all the women and children.

Only people essential in the running of the city and its war industry remained. For military reasons, he could not say what its population was then, just after the siege had been lifted; but it remained on a military basis, with a precise economy. Some estimates published abroad of the number who died of starvation were very exaggerated. He recalled one figure of 2 million which was absurd, as the entire population pre-war was $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions.

We asked Popkov if he could not say now what the figure was. He thought for a while, then said: "I would rather not. I feel no good purpose would be served by telling the enemy now how many of us died from hunger. It is a very painful subject for many of us, too. Of course the numbers will be stated in due course. But not, I dare say, until after the war."

My own guess, and it could be no more than that although based on talks with Leningraders whom I met during my visit, was that several hundred thousand people must have died of starvation. Two hundred thousand, three or four hundred thousand? It is impossible to say. But for those who stuck the siege all through, it was two years of uninterrupted nightmare—by far the most horrible siege which history will have to record over several hundred years. I was to hear stories which established that beyond all doubt later the same evening, when I went to a gathering in the House of Scientists.

In saying good-bye, the mayor said his people had buoyed themselves up during it all by thinking of how they might rebuild their city after the war, more beautiful than before. And if the plans which Baranov showed me are carried through, they ought to succeed. The intention is to build afresh, not in the modern Mendelssohn style which was inopportunately attempted in Leningrad during the twenties, but in a modified eighteenth century style, to harmonise with the great buildings already existing. Moscow is to be a modern city, with skyscrapers where needed: but Leningrad is to be preserved in the spirit of the Empresses Elizabeth and Catherine—surely a very wise decision.

We asked the mayor if he would visit London and Washington and he said, "Gentlemen, I would like to. But first we have the war to finish."

As we left the Smolny through chambers where Lenin often strode, a guard of Tommy-gunners presented arms. Outside, not a footfall disturbed the silence of the great frozen squares. A great copper moon glowed. The falling snowflakes looked like drops of silver in its light. The Finnish guns were silent. Leningrad was bathed in peace again.

The House of Scientists is the former palace of the Grand Duke Nicholas, which stands on the Neva Embankment opposite the fortress of Peter and Paul. An unfinished cruiser was moored in front of it and close by were a Soviet liner with very modern lines

and what looked, in the moonlit mists, like the outline of the battleship *Kirov*.

Someone told me that this was the palace where Rasputin was murdered and as I passed up the marble stairs I gave myself a *frisson* through imagining Rasputin being chased down them, only to find later that this was *not* the place.

In a rather sombre panelled room were grouped most of the "intelligentsia" of Leningrad who had been through the siege, ready to tell us all they could of their experiences. On almost every trip to the Soviet front in this war I have at one time or another been conducted into some place where the local "intelligentsia" were assembled to meet us.

10 a.m. Visit to the battlefield.

1300 hours. Inspection of bodies exhumed from Nazi concentration camp.

1600 hours. Meeting with Intelligentsia (tea will be served).

That was a very typical programme for us.

Normally we preferred to speak to ordinary citizens rather than "intelligentsia"—though as reporters we appreciated the implied compliment—but here was one occasion where professors and scientists were well worth meeting.

From them we heard countless stories more terrible than any I had yet heard (though I have heard worse since). All grew out of the one central horror. Starvation. Starvation that was not just a temporary thing, ended by evacuation or by death, but which dragged on month after month with unconscious yet actual cruelty because the tiny ration would fluctuate up and down, suddenly giving a fillip to lives that were almost extinct, then deflating them again. Death would hover over a body for a month, then take a holiday if the next ration period was a trifle better. Extraordinary it was to hear from these men that they felt no permanent ill effects from these periods of starvation. Most were still very cadaverous. But nearly all had had medical check-ups since which were reassuring.

Elias Berg, conductor of the Leningrad Symphony Orchestra, told me that when he broadcast Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony to England on the night of October 28, 1941, the red light went just after a German raid had wounded two members of the orchestra and blasted out all the windows of the studio. But the wounded men played their parts. In the mornings the orchestra helped build trenches and acted as medical orderlies in the afternoon. In the

evenings they rehearsed. By February, 1942, they had become so weak from lack of food that for three weeks they could not play at all. Then when the ice road over the lake improved and more food came in, they resumed their concerts up and down the front.

They played Shostakovitch's Leningrad Symphony for the first time on August 9, 1942, at the Philharmonic Hall with shelling going on all through the performances. Some of the audience were so weak they could hardly stand yet there was a great queue to gain admission. The score of the symphony was flown in during May but it took several months to rehearse because there was no paper to copy the parts and no reeds for oboes.

Professor Paul Kobeko was in charge of a group of scientists working on what he called "topsy-turvy chemistry." They were trying to utilise chemicals for food. The University of Leningrad remained open all through and many a young scientist received his degree during the siege.

Professor Alexander Verigo, an expert on cosmic rays who has penetrated into the stratosphere, told me he worked on aids to aerial navigation and various gadgets for aircraft which were still on the secret list. Generally, he said, it was too early to say much about the work of Leningrad scientists during the siege because nearly all of it was secret war work.

Major Vassili Matsievitch, wearing the gold star of Hero of the Soviet Union, is a veteran night-fighter pilot who specialised in spotting siege-guns by their flashes and shooting up the batteries in the dark. It was over Leningrad, he said, that the first German planes were rammed, pilots like Sebastianov and Haritonov ramming the enemy more than once and living to tell the tale. The practice began at a time when the Russians, outnumbered over Leningrad, yet had to try to prevent mass raids on the city. At the start 100 bombers would appear simultaneously over the city, but later they were forced into another tactic—coming over in twos and threes all day long, to keep the citizens' nerves on edge. Once Sebastianov rammed a Heinkel 111 and both pilots parachuted in the glare of searchlights, visible to all Leningrad. The German pilot wrapped himself in his white chute and tried to hide in the snow while Sebastianov, mistaken for the German by furious housewives, was hounded through the streets and escaped being lynched only through the intervention of the militia.

Presently the doors into an adjoining room were thrown open and the chairman announced that we would adjourn for a cup of

tea. It was about 11 o'clock at night. Expecting to find a table with a samovar and perhaps some biscuits, we stepped into a spacious saloon and saw, with a mixture of horror and guilty pleasure, a splendid supper laid out at three large tables which were also laden with bottles of vodka and every kind of Russian wine. Not many days before the city had been on siege rations; now a banquet the like of which war-time London would certainly not countenance lay before us—*hors d'œuvres* on the lavish Russian scale, beetroot soup with sour cream, roast chicken and cream cake. It was extremely embarrassing, but touching too. A bizarre note of hospitality in a place where the relatives of some of those present had actually starved to death . . . and yet there was a challenge about it also. Like a harvest festival in an English village where (if one can imagine such a thing) the last year's crop had been so bad that every one had gone hungry. The groaning boards seemed to say: "Leningrad has been through hell but this is our way of indicating the rich kind of life we intend to have in the future!" You wished the beaten German armies retreating to the west could have seen those boards. . . . And then what a marvellous evening it was for our hosts themselves, a dream meal that must often have haunted them during those 2½ years of misery.

Then the vodka flowed as I had never seen it flow before. Corks popped, conversation bubbled forth, toasts began going around from the first sip. They refused to let us have vodka in the usual glass. There *were* no vodka glasses. They made you drink the fearsome stuff out of claret glasses, and no heel-taps either—"hunting vodka," "pepper vodka" and a kind of lemon vodka, besides the usual sort.

I proposed a toast to Comrade Zhdanov, which was honoured in the way a Muscovite would honour a toast to Stalin. Two minutes later up popped another correspondent and proposed the same name.

A moment or two later William Lawrence of the *New York Times* rose to his feet, coughed impressively for silence, and raised his glass to the same illustrious person. The white-bearded and bespectacled scientists popped up and down dutifully, repeating "Comrade Zhdanov" . . . "Comrade Zhdanov again" . . . politely impressed by the strange foreign custom of drinking a toast three times. But their own hospitality was such that before the evening ended, at 2.30 the next morning, there were few distinguished names in any allied country who had not received the bibulous

accolade. Homer Smith, the American negro correspondent, rung a change by calling for "two minutes' silence" in honour of the poet Pushkin, whose birthday it was. For exactly two minutes the laughter was halted; every one became preternaturally solemn. Behind discreet hands it was whispered from noddle to academic noddle that the poet's negro blood entitled him to especial honour among the children of Ham in the United States. And so aged knees were stiffened, bent bodies stood erect in tribute to the immortal memory. . . .

When we all streamed out on to the glistening embankment it felt like walking on the icing of a Christmas cake. The cold air did execution among the overheated guests. But nobody was the least embarrassed. Russian hospitality quite frankly sets out to make the guest drunk: that is the honest purpose of these banquets which, I believe, were just the same in the old Russia as in the new. You must leave any nimminy-pimminy Western ideas of deportment outside a Russian banquet—that is the only thing to do. Honour still attaches to him who can hold his liquor: but the test is one of time, it cannot be absolute, and if you should end up under the table, no one will think the worse of you.

Four hours later we were up again, rushing round in a bus to the Red Army Officers' Club to meet a representative of General Govarov, the Front commander, who came to give us the latest news. Major-General Alexander Vozdkov, aged forty-five, had a completely bald head and a parade-ground voice. He had been in the Russian Army since 1916. In appearance, he might easily have been a German. With large wall maps he gave us a lucid description of the whole course of the siege and liberation. The club had been a Czarist officers' club before 1917 and can hardly have altered since. The furniture was Russian Empire style. Beautiful sets of ivory chessmen stood on rows of tables, with a pair of bergere chairs set to each and there were rooms for billiards and cards. It was all very luxurious but deathly cold—there was not even a portable stove in the place.

After this we had a few hours to ourselves in which to wander round the city. Some of us bought books. The bookstores along the Nevski Prospekt are far superior to those in Moscow for old volumes and there were novels and books of verse which had been published in Leningrad during the siege.

Walking in these splendid streets which in their frozen dress looked just as they do in the old prints of St. Petersburg, one could.

appreciate why it was the Bolsheviks had to move the capital to Moscow. Leningrad is a glorious city—the eighteenth century at its finest—but it is not in the least Russian.

It is, much too much, a “Window on Europe.” Living there, it would be easy to forget all about the vast dark hinterland with its primitive villages and all its unsolved problems. Leningrad’s susceptibility to foreign attack was a serious consideration, but more serious still must have been the attack which Leningrad makes on the susceptibilities of those who breathe her baroque air. A Soviet government established in these serene palaces could easily have drifted right away from the people. How much of the Czarist government’s detachment from reality was not attributable to the exotic surroundings in which it dwelt? And then these lovely buildings . . . are they suited to a modern people’s government? So many cannot be used for anything except museums. The private palaces make very poor tenements. It is possible to *live* in the Kremlin but the Winter Palace is like something set up in a film studio. Leningrad, the great Imperial city, needs a court to justify its existence : a bustling, businesslike government conducted by men in peasant blouses, who go home in the early hours to a two-room flat and spend their hours off at the football stadium or the cinema—such a government could not but look askance at a city which may look like a dream of Canaletto but was actually designed for the use of a few aristocrats, tended by regiments of serfs and footmen.

As recognition for her role in the war, Leningrad may become the capital of the R.S.F.S.R. while Moscow remains the capital of the Union. But you feel that the greater part of Leningrad must remain as a museum of Imperial Russia : the industrial city on the outskirts will develop on new lines but the ancient core can never be socialist, although Lenin laboured there. It is too strongly permeated by the spirit of the Romanov architects—Rastrelli, Sakharov and de la Mothe.

5

R U S S K I L U D I

RETURNING to Moscow after a week's absence (already the trains were running better and we knocked several hours off our homeward journey) we got ready to dig ourselves in. General Govarov's advance had halted at the Estonian frontier: in the Ukraine 10 German divisions trapped at Khorsun-Shevchenkovski were being steadily ground to pieces. But it did not seem that we would get another trip for a spell and this seemed the right moment to start battling with the Russian language and to begin to get the feel of Moscow generally.

It is difficult for the Englishman to put himself in the right frame of mind in which to appreciate the Russian people.

Socialism forms no bridge between habits of mind that are as far apart as the English and the Russian. Not only in their literature and drama but in their daily life, the Russians move without embarrassment on the heroic plane. Perhaps this is why Shakespeare is so popular. Translated, of course, into modern Russian from Elizabethan English, he seems almost a contemporary to Russians. Iris thinks that in this war the Russians are going through a Marlovian phrase. Certainly their war books and even war journalism are more in the line of Tamburlaine than in the pattern of Old Bill.

The Russian girls who worked for the *Britanski Soyuznik* gave their blood to a blood bank, with the rest of the staff. Here is the letter which one of them, Frida, received from a Red Army man:

"Good day, dear Comrade Chaplinskaya:

"Your blood which you gave on the first June now flows in the veins of one of the defenders of Stalingrad. As your blood was transfused into me I felt it bring me life and joy. After transfusion I felt much better than before, for I have replaced the blood I had shed.

"Your blood has revived in me an even greater hate and anger which no force of nature can extinguish but the complete

rout of the German fascist hordes who treacherously invaded our fatherland.

"You have my sincere, heartiest thanks—the thanks of a Red Army officer. Again, I am most grateful for your blood.

"With greetings,

"Yours

"PLOYAKOV."

It is impossible to conceive of a British soldier, writing to thank some unknown girl in England for the same service, expressing himself in terms like these. The Englishman would employ a note of humorous bathos. A sophisticated actor, he would play his part down, "throw his lines away."

The Russian plays his part out like an Irving. The self-depreciation of the Englishman—an inverted form of pride—is quite foreign to him. These traits do not derive from Marxism or from its absence: they are the legacy of two utterly divergent national developments over the last 300 years.

Iris had seen Constantin Semenov's play, *Russki Ludi* (*The Russian People*), done at the Old Vic. When we saw the production at the Vaktangova Theatre we found, in place of the English restraint, a full-blooded acceptance of every emotional situation which seemed to us melodramatic, for in an English war play of to-day actors do not behave as though the play were *Henry V*. But if a Russian actor has to deliver a line replete with lofty patriotism he will give it to you at the top of his voice; and the audience will accept it "straight" without the least diffidence.

A full junction between Russian life and English life was made by very few people in war-time Moscow. The only two successful cases were John Evans, a free-lance English journalist, and John Gibbons, correspondent for the New York and the London *Daily Worker*.

John Evans had spent two years on the dole in Manchester, in the worst depression years. Unlike so many people who come to Moscow and air their views about the Working Class, he really knew what working class life was like. The peak of his career was playing the piano in a cinema; then the talkies lost him his job. He taught himself Russian in public libraries and in chats with Russian sailors at Manchester docks. Then he went to Russia, not as a Communist, but simply because he thought he could get work there, when none offered at home. He was not disappointed.

John's views on the U.S.S.R. are not the orthodox "Leftist" views: he dislikes a great deal of what he sees there and the men who write the caustic editorials in *Pravda* are no sterner enemies of bureaucracy than he. But when all has been said, he will tell you just what he found in Russia which his own country could not give him—the certainty of constant employment, one month's holiday on full pay in each year, no worry about rent which is precisely £1 per month or about dentists and doctoring, or operations, which cost nothing at all and no worry about educating his children (£2 or £3 a year for secondary education and about £6 a year for the university). A skilled mechanic in England, buying his own house on instalments, would live better than John, *in good years*, but in bad years there was no guarantee that he might not sink down to Dole level, and John had seen what that could entail. He had seen his best friend swinging on a beam in his own kitchen—a rope round his neck and despair in his dead heart.

John Gibbons, who had spent part of a romantic youth in the I.R.A., had the orthodox Communist viewpoint, though he did not think that Russian Communists were always right and English Progressives always wrong. After 7 years in Russia, he was very ready to go home but his wife, a Portsmouth girl, who always seemed to me to be the perfect Englishwoman abroad and not in the least ideological, was not in a hurry to go. In Moscow she had to live in one room, while at home she would have had a whole villa to herself; but she liked the easy informality of Moscow life, from which she had a change in the summertime by taking a "datcha" for £12 for the season, and she told me if she took her two children home she feared there might be no "openings" for them. In England the children from expensive schools still contrived to skim off the best jobs whereas in Moscow her girl might become a doctor and her son a radio engineer, if they continued their present bents.

But when she said, "You seem to get on easily in Russia—wouldn't you like to stay on here?" I had to tell her, no.

I don't think any one who has had a bourgeois upbringing in the West would be happy in the U.S.S.R. for long. It is not just a question of creature comforts—or capacity to endure the savage Russian climate—and it certainly has nothing to do with ideology. One might quite consistently be a Communist in England and still not desire to live in Russia. The parrot cry, "If you're a Bolshy,

why don't you try living in Russia?" is just as irrelevant as saying to a British Tory Businessman, "Why don't you set up your brass plate in Wall Street?" If Stalin has demonstrated nothing else, he has certainly shown that one may be a Communist and still love one's own country above others.

The Russian land is awe-inspiring, but to me it is not lovable. Here you find none of the grace of France or the peace of England. You have only to study old pictures and photographs to realise that Russia was always an untidy, ill-kempt, gloomy country and that Nature has not been transformed in 25 years. The winter falls like a blight over six thousand miles for six months of the year and brings all active life to a halt in the countryside.

Again, to appreciate what Soviet society has already wrought and to live in hope for the future, it is necessary, if you are a foreigner, to be saturated in the Russian classics, for these define very clearly the path which Soviet life had to tread. And unfortunately the daily journalist like myself has no time to steep himself in the Russian classics. Forty years ago, in writing *The Cherry Orchard*, Tchekov put into the mouth of his "perpetual student" Trefimov perhaps the most perfect summation of the Old Russia that we have:

"At present only a few men work in Russia," says Trefimov. "The vast majority of the educated people I know seek after nothing, do nothing, and are as yet incapable of work. They call themselves 'Intelligentsia,' they say 'thou' and 'thee' to the servants, they treat the peasants like animals, learn nothing, read nothing serious, do absolutely nothing, only talk about science, and understand little or nothing about art. They are all serious: they all have solemn faces: they only discuss important subjects; they philosophise; but meanwhile the vast majority of us, 99 per cent, live like sayages; at the least thing they curse and punch people's heads; they eat like beasts and sleep in dirt and bad air; there are bugs everywhere, evil smells, damp and moral degradation. . . . It's plain that all our clever conversations are only meant to distract our own attention and other people's. Show me where these crêches are, that they're always talking so much about; or those reading-rooms. They are only things people write about in novels; they don't really exist at all. Nothing exists but dirt, vulgarity and Asiatic ways. . . ."

The crêches and reading-rooms are there now. But on what a foundation was the new Russia built! and how hard is it for people

whose industrial revolution began 150 years ago to adjust themselves to a society in which the industrial revolution is still, even now, taking place!

Stalin spoke with the ruthless self-knowledge of Trefimov when, in his famous speech of February 4, 1931, he told the managers of Soviet industry that it was impossible to slow the cruelly fast tempo of the Five-year plan because to do so would be to risk defeat in the inevitable war.

"The history of Old Russia is the history of defeats due to backwardness," said Stalin. "She was beaten by the Mongol Khans. She was beaten by the Turkish Beys. She was beaten by the Swedish feudal barons. She was beaten by the Polish-Lithuanian squires. She was beaten by the Anglo-French capitalists. She was beaten by the Japanese barons. All beat her for her backwardness—military, cultural, governmental, industrial, agricultural backwardness. She was beaten because to beat her was profitable and could be done with impunity. . . . Do you want our Socialist Fatherland to be beaten and to lose its independence? If not, you must put an end to this backwardness as speedily as possible and develop genuine Bolshevik speed in building up the Socialist system of economy. There is no other way."

And he added: "We are 50 to 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must cover this distance in 10 years. Either we do this or they will crush us."

Well, Germany, the most advanced industrial power in Europe, did not crush Russia because, in heavy industry and war production at least, this distance *was* covered, and in precisely the 10 years of which Stalin spoke. But in some other departments of life, the gap has not yet been filled. It would be absurd to expect that it could have been.

What seems to us like a caricature—the brutishness depicted in the plays of Ostrovsky—was in fact the inevitable distillation of an undeveloped society, isolated by immense distances and a harsh climate. Those distances and that climate are still there. Every advance in Soviet civilisation is, in truth, a triumph over environment. Socialism in England would have to battle against great political and economic difficulties. Socialism in Russia faces those same difficulties, but intensified and conditioned, over the years, by intense physical handicaps. Unless you yourself are conditioned to those handicaps by being born a Russian, I think they would weigh too heavily upon one. Political exiles like Dimitroff and La

Passionaria have settled well in Russia, but I am sure they will return to their own lands as soon as that becomes possible.

In February, 1944, Moscow had not had an air raid for over a year and they were beginning to clear the damaged areas and repair the houses. On the corner of Arbat Square, near the underground station that is shaped like a red star, they pulled down a stricken house and erected on the ruins a formal Dutch garden. The site was cleared and the grass and trees planted in six weeks. One of the stout peasant women who did the job told me with pride: "We worked like foreigners on this job."

Russians are perfectly conscious of the national deficiencies they inherit from the past and very ready to learn from abroad.* They admire American industrial efficiency and English polish, but I have never encountered a Russian who admired the political institutions of either country. So that when our *Britanski Soyuznik* carries a page of pictures of the King and Queen and the Princesses inspecting this or that, we are really wasting our time. Our monarchy, to be frank, strikes Russians I have spoken to as downright ridiculous, an archaic piece of play-acting. The idealisation of England which the British Council strives to put over abroad is not the sort of thing the Russians admire, in any case.

The Moscow of February, '44, had already passed the worst. But life was not improving or progressing, it was merely standing still. No building was possible and the overcrowding in the apartment-houses, in the trams and the Metro was inconceivable. At least 2,000,000 people more than the city could hold were trying to live in it. Nestling beneath great apartment-buildings were derelict wooden houses, still inhabited, although long scheduled for demolition. Most of the city had not been repainted for 15 years, because most of it was about to be pulled down, although the programme always lagged behind demand.† Some of the two-storey houses in the Moscow Empire style, with their

*"We have never concealed the fact that in the sphere of technique we are the pupils of the Germans, the English, the French, the Italians and first and foremost, of the Americans.

"Everyone knows that the general cultural level of the masses is lower here than in the U.S.A., Britain and Germany."—STALIN, on June 27, 1930, addressing the central committee of the Communist Party.

†House property gets so battered by the climate that it ought really to be repainted each year but I believe even before the revolution there was a chronic deficiency of paint. Russian towns always *were* peeling and shabby for the most part.

baroque scrollwork and their cornucopias or cherubs supporting the roofs, still looked charming. But heaven knows how many families lived inside each. Leningrad had been less crowded, because of the siege. But even here, General Ignatiev, the former count who had been the Czar's military attaché in Paris before he joined the Bolsheviks, found 500 people living in his old mansion, where once only his wife and himself had sat it out among a regiment of servants.

"That's real progress!" exclaimed the general, without irony. But his wife is said to have observed, "Yuri, don't be a fool!"

In the beginning the workers occupied what were then the best houses in town. But they soon ceased to be the best. They might have 20 bedrooms and only two privies, which would mean fifty or sixty people sharing those facilities to-day.

In the courtyards behind the old houses people lived in quarters that had once been used by coachmen, or for stabling. As this accommodation was classed "temporary" it was never repaired, and deteriorated year by year. Since nothing could be built, the existing slums became more slummy as the war went on. Passing some faded old mansion as the lights were going on, you might see a room with three iron beds in it, a table and chairs and a chest of drawers, a hanging-cupboard and a radio and an electric table-griller in the corner. All spotlessly clean. That would be a typical Moscow home. Three people of a family might live in that room, maybe more. Their main meal they would take at the "Stolovaya" at their place of work, so that not much cooking would take place in the room: often there would be a communal kitchen and bathroom down the passage.

The people who lived in such a room would retain a sort of bohemian attitude to life, even if they were past middle-age. It was the best, the only attitude, to adopt.

If they were young they would have a sense of limitless horizons before them because their country is so vast and so relatively undeveloped. Young doctors or teachers, educated in Moscow, often go to live and work 3000 or 4000 miles away. "Openings" are innumerable.

The young men you would see in fur cap, fur coat and top boots on their way to work: some would wear the odd little blue caps Russian workers affect, as English artisans the bowler. They would have a scrubbed, homespun look about them. Low living and, if you cared for it, high thinking. The ambitious young Scot

who lives on oatmeal and attends night classes—that would be the type.

The girls would be muffled up like the men. But when they went to the theatre you would see them in simple silk dresses, often with their hair plaited or in pigtails, with bows. Not the least trace of fashion about them. There *is* no fashion in Russia. You will see people wearing garments, *circa* 1920, often of excellent material, but quite untropical. But the women love smart things when they can get them and although their figures are often dumpy, they have neat feet, fine hair and natural complexions and they are as feminine in taste as women anywhere. Alexander Woolcott boasted that he won the favour of a Muscovite girl with the gift of toilet paper. But to-day the most desirable present would be a copy of *Vogue* or *Harper's Bazaar*.

Salary often bore no relation to one's place in life. A girl doing skilled work in a war plant might make a lot of roubles whereas an "intellectual" might make hardly any money, yet get a good ration and superior living quarters. Or it might be the other way round, according to the comparative value of their services and the facilities at the disposal of the trust or institution for which they worked.

In war factories the work was of a killing intensity. But in offices, so far as I observed them, it was not so. The average Soviet citizen does not glory in work for its own sake. At the start of the revolution it was confidently assumed that from then on, every one would work much less than before. For many years the seven-hour day was in being and the nation had such an enormous labour force that there seemed no call for any one to labour too strenuously. It was only with the first 5-year plan that this trend was reversed. It had to be. The Russian worker, producing at his post-revolutionary tempo, could never have got through the Five-year plan on schedule. But the ultimate objective of less work all round remains. And in some offices it is obviously being realised already! A good deal of the bureaucracy of which every one complains is merely the fruit of a healthy human inclination not to treat oneself as sweated labour. And if Socialism means that we are all working for each other, then of course we should not demand that our neighbours work their fingers to the bone on our behalf. . . .

The place of work was usually utilitarian rather than beautiful. Very few of the new factories are handsome—they were built with too much urgency for that. Many offices are housed in old, un-

suitable buildings. In winter there is a choking smell of Mach-
orcha, the cheap tobacco which most men roll into cigarettes
themselves; if the place is well-heated, it is thanks to the efforts
of the staff themselves, who have gone out into the country to
chop wood during the summer months.

The building of the Council of People's Commissars, which
stands on the corner of Gorky Street, opposite the Moskva Hotel,
is as fine an office building as you'd find anywhere in London.
The Commissariat of Light Industry, built by the French architect
le Corbusier in his customary glass and concrete, is satisfying too.
But the Foreign Office is housed in a huge U-shaped block of
Edwardian flats, built by a Belgian financier before the revolution,
and many other important offices are to be found in old broken-
down mansions all over town.

The general architecture of the city is extremely poor. The only
really satisfying piece of Soviet work, on which most foreigners
can agree, is the Tomb of Lenin in Red Square, which, with its
dignified planes of polished red granite, fits smoothly into the line
of the Kremlin's walls and towers. Moscow remained just an over-
grown village during the 200 years in which the Czars were
building the splendour of St. Petersburg—a village with 400
churches, many of them a debased form of Byzantine. Take away
the appeal of those 400 churches, of Moscow as the religious capital
of the whole Slav world, and all you have left is an untidy in-
dustrial town, with miles of rough cobbles and one-storey wooden
shacks half-hidden behind the new apartments and offices.

The Moskva Hotel is the Hotel Pennsylvania of New York in
miniature. Gorky Street's magnificent expanse is lined with
ponderous Germanic-looking buildings with heroic figures of male
and female workers, with and without offspring, poised awkwardly
along their parapets. An odd de-nationalised style. ("In the new
Moscow we have room for all styles," the city architect tells me.)
Let us be charitable and allow that they are still experimenting.
But what can be said about the monstrous scheme (officially
announced for resumption after the war) for building a skyscraper
higher than the Empire State Building on the site of the old
Cathedral of the Redeemer—a skyscraper which would tower
hundreds of feet above the Kremlin, and reduce the noble river
front which carries along past the Imperial Foundling Hospital
to a mere back block? This would be the Palace of Soviets, topped
by a huge statue of Lenin. The material and labour which will go

into this mammoth would suffice to build scores of the apartment-houses which the people of Moscow desperately need. But I make no doubt that the Palace will come first. Already a metro station on the site has been named "Palace of Soviets." The steel scaffolding was taken for war industry, but they are draining water out of the vast foundations, preparing to build again.

They do strange things, these Russian people, including things that would raise howls of protest in the parliamentary democracies of the West. Yet it is folly for the Westerner to measure them against his own standards—standards which have been so worked upon by the seepage of Fabianism through every cranny of our political life for over half a century now that, one ventures to think, they are no longer reliable even in our own land. How do *we* know what England would be like under a government of working men? It might be very different from what we now think. Our new rulers might develop a taste in architecture that Fabian architects would deplore; they might instal a mode of life and fashions in clothing and domestic arrangements that we bourgeois revolutionaries would find very queer. They might have ideas on education and nutrition that would horrify the present "expert" in those fields. So the Liberal who goes to Russia from the bourgeois West is bound to start off on the wrong foot. If he cannot even imagine (as I certainly cannot) what a Communist England would look like, how much less can he understand a society built to the specifications of Georgian, Russian, Armenian, Jewish and Ukrainian working men whose grandfathers were illiterate slaves on noblemen's estates?

No wonder that the people of modern Russia are anything but an open book to us.

6

SOME CHORES AND A PARTY

BEFORE Govarov began his offensive at Leningrad, some 257 German and satellite divisions were on the Eastern Front. Of these 207 were German. By the time Stalin came to make his annual speech on November 7th, 1944, the anniversary of the Revolution, the Red Army had in nine separate offensives starting in January and carrying through to October of that year, reduced the enemy's strength to only 180 German divisions, plus some 24 Hungarian. In these 10 months of fighting 120 German and satellite divisions were routed, though many were restocked with reinforcements and trotted into the field bearing the same name. These nine campaigns were:

1. January and February at Leningrad and Nijni-Novgorod which resulted in the enemy being flung back into the Baltic states.

2. February-March. Rout of the Germans and Rumanians on the River Bug, throwing them back to the Dniester.

3. April-May. Liberation of Odessa and the Crimea.

4. June. Offensive on the Karelian Isthmus and farther north. Recapture of Viborg and Petrozavodsk.

5. June-July. Offensive in White Russia, beginning at Vitebsk and ending with the encirclement of 30 German divisions at Minsk. The Red Army liberated all White Russia, swept forward to the Vistula in Poland and to the Niemen, liberating most of Lithuania, finally crossing the Niemen and approaching within a few miles of East Prussia.

6. July-August. Rout of the Germans at Lvov: liberation of all Western Ukraine (former Poland) and forcing of the southern reaches of the Vistula, with big bridgehead pointing at Cracow set up west of Sandomir.

7. August. Attack at Jassy and Kishinev, encirclement of 22 German divisions at Kishinev with liberation of the Moldavian S.S.R., consequent surrender of Rumania and Bulgaria; freeing of

entire Black Sea and drive along the Danube Valley towards Hungary and Yugoslavia.

8. September-October. Rout of the Germans in the Baltic States, liberation of Tallinn and Riga. Surrender of Finland. Over 30 German divisions cut off from East Prussia and broken up in Latvia.

9. October. Offensive between the rivers Tissa and Danube with the object of finishing off Germany's last ally, Hungary, coupled with the liberation of Belgrade and crossing of the Carpathians, with liberation of the eastern province of Czechoslovakia, the Carpatho-Ukraine.

I saw something of six of these campaigns in visits to the front and will deal with each in turn—not attempting to give the whole military picture, which is in any case too vast, but merely touching on what I saw myself in these six battle areas.

February 18, 1944.—The greatest slaughter of Hitlerites in Russia since the war began has just been concluded by the 2nd Ukrainian Army under General Koniev. Proportionately the destruction of the enemy at what may become known in Russian military history as “the massacre of Khorsun-Shevchenkivsky” was greater than at Stalingrad—52,000 killed, only 11,000 taken prisoner, with 2000 to 3000 officers withdrawn in Junkers 52's and another three or four thousand men wandering in twos and threes, hiding in ditches, vainly trying to get out of the vice that had been laid around them. Between 70,000 and 80,000 men were encircled. Once again, Hitler deceived his soldiers. After issuing an order of the day commanding them to hold on, as help was coming from without, he changed his mind when attempts at relief failed and ordered the marooned men to fight on and sell their lives dearly in order to hold up the Russians for a few more valuable days. But to no avail.

This memorable massacre frees several Soviet divisions for fresh offensive action to the West. Koniev has forced upon the two German corps commanders who were cut off—Generals Stemmermann and Mattenklot—an ignominious comparison with his own record in the first months of the war when for the first time the world heard: “Troops under Comrade Koniev, especially Cossacks, are attacking the enemy's rear.” Finally Koniev and his men fought their way out of encirclement.

But Stemmermann and Mattenklot, with thousands of their

officers, abandoned their men and flew to safety by air. The weather is now improving. Snow has ceased falling, the ground is hardening so conditions are ripe for Koniev to follow up this triumph and the situation of the Germans in the lower bend of the Dnieper looks grave indeed.

When Koniev and Vatutin began operations against these two army corps the enemy held a wide arc between Smyela and Mironov, the point of which formed an arrowhead directed towards cutting the advance of the Russian armies from the Dnieper. At the same time this arrowhead formed a shield for the Germans who still held Nikopol, Krivoi Rog and the coast along the Black Sea. In the initial bombardment thousands of guns were used and so many gaps were made in the enemy positions that the Russians were able to advance *en masse* through them. However, the weather was then atrocious and remained so throughout the operation. Roads were just swamps, mud was several feet deep and the guns had to be dragged by hand. Then Koniev's Cossacks who had fought their way out of Poland with him in 1941, came into their own. At times they left their horses in the rear and advanced as infantry, using machine-guns and tommy-guns. As the Russians pressed inward they found German guns and vehicles abandoned by thousands in the mud. After Khorsun-Shevchenkovsky fell two days ago the German-held area became so compressed that ammunition and food dropped by German planes fell into the Russian lines, as at Stalingrad. Finally the area was only a few miles square.

On February 8th an ultimatum signed by Marshal Zhukov as well as by Koniev and Vatutin was presented, with a time limit of 11 a.m. the next day, demanding immediate surrender with equipment handed over undamaged and guaranteeing "to all who cease resistance, life and safety and after the war return to Germany or any other country, according to the personal wish of the prisoner," which indicates that there were non-German soldiers among these trapped. It was also promised that officers should keep their swords and decorations and that private possessions would be respected. But on Hitler's order this ultimatum was ignored. The Russian High Command then gave the order: "Annihilate them." To-day less than 4000 are unaccounted for: some are trying to hold out in ravines south of the village of Shandirovko but like their comrades before them, they are being systematically wiped out.

The Germans massed eight armoured divisions mostly with Tiger Tanks and Ferdinand tractor-guns with several infantry divisions plus 600 bombers, fighters and transport planes to try to break open the circle. But though they succeeded in wedging a little into the rear of the besiegers, it was all in vain. No fewer than 179 Junker 52's were destroyed and over 600 tanks and 374 guns. Twenty-five tanks and 124 guns were captured intact. Prisoners state that the German wounded were killed, and the bodies burned, by their own men, and that numerous cases of suicide occurred among the despairing soldiers. After the ultimatum expired, the German command within reached the desperate decision to abandon its material and try to break out in small columns, or even singly. The commander of the 16th Panzer Division outside, when his attempt at relief failed, signalled: "Gather yourselves into striking fists and break out to me."

Three issues of schnapps were given to the soldiers in a single glass and, under cover of snow which began falling again, they tried to break out. Intoxicated Nazis came reeling up against the Soviet lines, only to be mown down in hundreds. In all, thousands, fell to Soviet fire with as little hope as cornered rats faced by skilled exterminators. In the village of Komarovko 2000 German bodies were piled in the fresh snow.

"Like lava the Cossacks broke into the Hitlerite formations, chopping them up with their sabres," declares one front report. Tens of thousands of bodies lie on the field. Fortunately it is now freezing again so the problem of burial is not of such immediate acuteness. But to clear a way for traffic in one place, the German bodies had to be piled one on top of another like logs of wood.

Moscow's 1 a.m. curfew was suspended last night so that the citizens could witness a Victory salute. There was singing in the streets and at half-past two in the morning columns of soldiers were marching beneath my window chanting those tremendous battle hymns of the Red Army. It was a great night. In the whole of this war, no victory has been more complete, more satisfying.

February 20th, 1944.—This morning I went round to the Troitsky Gate of the Kremlin and handed in this letter to the guards:

"Dear Marshal Stalin:

"The people of London, who erected a memorial plaque upon the house where Lenin lived when he was among them, would

wish to commemorate in the same way the visit you paid to London in April and May, 1907.

"When I was in London in December I tried to discover in which part of our city you stayed, but to no avail.

"Would it be possible to obtain some information about your stay among us when you attended the Fifth Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party? This would be of the greatest historic interest and would, I am sure, greatly please your many admirers among the British people.

"Yours sincerely, etc."

*I have very small hope of receiving an answer to this. In London or Washington it would be inconceivable that the answer to an equivalent question should not be generally known; but here a pall of ignorance covers every aspect of an important life except that which appertains to office-holding itself. The Soviets abhor personalities. Originally, this was because they did not want to make ikons of their leading men—images with all sorts of legends and foolish gossip clinging to them. This attitude has not prevented a fantastic hero-worship, first of Lenin and now of Stalin. But the old reticence about public figures remains, although it no longer serves any purpose.

For the first time in the Soviet Union a newspaper appears today of which one-quarter is devoted to pictures and stories about the King of England. *Britanski Soyuznik* (British Ally), published here by the Ministry of Information, carries over its centre page 13 pictures of the King on various war fronts, of the Queen with

*It was only 9 months later that I got my answer. Dining with our ambassador in Teheran, Sir Reader Bullard, whole on my way through to Cairo, I discovered that Whitechapel was the place where Stalin stayed in 1907. After Churchill's famous birthday dinner in the British Embassy during the Teheran conference, Sir Reader was chatting in Russian with Voroshilov in the red drawing-room where all the royal portraits hang. Pointing to a coronation painting of George V, Voroshilov asked who it was and was surprised to learn that it was not Czar Nicholas II, but his English cousin. Sir Reader observed that though the two kings looked so alike, they had very different natures, to which Voroshilov politely replied, "Of course, your king was a good fellow."

At that moment Stalin walked up and, overhearing Voroshilov's words, added, "Yes, indeed. After all, he gave us permission to have our Congress in your country in 1907."

Of course Stalin was confusing George V with Edward VII. Then he added, "I was in London as a delegate, you know."

"Where did you stay?" asked the ambassador.

"Whitechapel," said Stalin shortly. He gave no more details. Probably, after the lapse of 36 years, he had forgotten the name of the street or the number of the house.

crowds in the East End, at the fireside with their family, inspecting bomb damage at Buckingham Palace and so on. An article by Hector Bolitho accompanies this lay-out. I am bound to say that I find it horribly servile in tone. Apart from this gem of Bolitho-ese—"He is the first pilot in English history who became King of the British Commonwealth"—there is a good deal here which will make it harder for the Russians to comprehend how inherited kingly office can be fitted into the fabric of a modern state. Some of the Russians I spoke to about this article *were* very interested in it—perhaps because the subject must appear to them exotic and quite outside their experience. One literal "flapper" (she had a long yellow pigtail bound in pink ribbon) exclaimed: "Oh, isn't he handsome!" and wanted to cut out the King's pictures to keep. She had never read a piece about a live king. On the other hand, more sophisticated people seemed politely unimpressed. We should be careful how we use personal publicity in Russia, where normally there is *none*. And the gushing tone of the usual English journalism about royal persons would not be employed in Russia even about the popular figures at the Circus. Surely it would be better to lay off kings and queens altogether and tell the Russians all about the ordinary people of England—the people with whom they will have to do business in the future, of whom they have certainly much to learn. . . .

February 20, 1944.—To a party at Tom Barman's, our first secretary, to meet our Ambassador, Clark-Kerr and the Minister, Jock Balfour. Clark-Kerr is very un-ambassadorial and as a result must rate, after the late Lord Lothian, as the most popular British ambassador with that exacting class, the American newspaper man. He says to my wife, "Fancy bringing that profile all the way from England"; goes on to say that few English or American women seem to be able to "take it" in Moscow for long, perhaps because of the complete absence of "shopping." Iris replies stoutly that she feels she can survive the absence of shops, since there has been little but "window-shopping" in England during the war.

Note for popular ambassadors, who have now abandoned the phrase, "Well, I was a newspaperman once myself": is not the expression, "Tell me why *you* are a Socialist and I'll tell you how I became one," also one of those Things that might be Better Left Unsaid?

February 21, 1944.—To the Bolshoi Theatre to see the great Galina Ulanova in *The Fountain of Bakchi-serai*, based on the

ballad by Pushkin. This dancer has been compared with Pavlova and to-night I understand why. The scene in Act Two in which she does that mournful dance of captivity is one of the most exciting I have ever seen in the theatre. This is not dancing—it is an effortless swimming through air. Nor is it dancing when, stabbed by the jealous wife of the Tartar Khan, she clings to the pillar, then slowly slides down it to her death: that is acting of supreme quality.

Ulanova has not got a good figure nor is she beautiful. She looks, and unhappily for the world, is, consumptive. But the difference between her performance and those of the highly talented Semyonova and Lepechinskaya is, to my mind, the difference between technical excellence and a real genius which may arise only once or twice in a century. In what that genius consists I cannot say. (I am not a ballet critic.) It has to be seen. The music of *Bakchi-serai* is hardly on the level of Tchaikovski, but the choreography is fine and the Tartar dancing in Act 3, though it may owe something to *Prince Igor*, probably could not even be attempted except by Russian dancers. The ballet is probably the best produced here in Soviet times.

It is by no means a "vehicle" for Ulanova because she appears in only three acts out of four, and one would like to see her in something like Prokoviev's *Romeo and Juliet* in her native setting, the Leningrad ballet. Yet this one glimpse of her is enough to make one for ever intolerant of the so-called "Ballet" we have been given in London and New York in recent years. Some of the leading dancers at Sadler's Wells could hardly get into the graduating class in the ballet schools of Moscow or Leningrad—and as for those ecstatic balletomanes in London who talk of Margot Fonteyne as though she were another Taglioni, one does not want to be unkind, but in the Bolshoi alone there must be at least six Margot Fonteynes. After a performance like this, the Sadler's Wells company appears in its true guise as a bunch of girls and boys who have done uncommonly well in very uphill circumstances and who may indeed be the nucleus for very big developments ten or twenty years from now. But the Bolshoi and the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad, are real ballet theatres; Sadler's Wells is more on the level of a ballet school.

February 22, 1944.—Alan Moorehead, waiting for the second front in London, and I here wrote a joint article for the *Express* to-day on the theme—will the Russians or the Western Allies get

to Berlin first? We had a bet of £10 on it, too. Giving my reasons for supposing that the Russians would be the first in, I pointed out that they are just 515 miles from Berlin, 240 from the frontier of East Prussia and 360 miles from Budapest. The natural approach to Germany is certainly across the Polish plain: from their present advanced base at Lutsk no by-passing is possible without coming up against the barrier of the Carpathian mountains. I said that on this front there is no weakening whatever of the German will to resist: that on the contrary the frenzy of their resistance is likely to increase when they are driven back on to their own soil; that the sort of mentality which produced this week's appeal to Roosevelt by the American Women's League for Peace and Freedom to postpone the invasion pending an appeal to the German people for an armistice would be certifiable here and that any nation which thinks there is some cheap way of winning the war is in for a shattering disillusionment. I dwelt on the studies which the Russians have made of Nazi psychology which have led them to believe that the Nazis are most unlikely to surrender, since Wagner is the key to their mentality and the leaders are more likely to take their own lives when the system they have created comes crashing down upon them in ruins. Aitch being a "G" in Russian, you can, with this anticipation, make up nice sentences about a Gotterdammerung involving Gitler, Goebbels, Goering, Gimmmler and Gess.

February 23, 1944.—Red flags are flying everywhere to-day on the 26th anniversary of the foundation of the Red Army, and from Lutsk in the west to Vladivostock on the Pacific the occasion is being celebrated with as much festivity as tight rationing permits. At the front, the Party organisers among the soldiers arranged meetings at which Stalin's order of the day was read. In the hospitals the nation's sad army of wounded weren't forgotten, gifts being distributed to mark the occasion. Men invalided out as cripples also received small presents. I know two brothers whose cases were typical. Simeon lost both legs and Ephraim both feet at the front. They live together in one room in Moscow. Simeon, who was a lieutenant, receives a pension of 750 roubles a month, roughly £15, and his brother who was an enlisted man, a good deal less. This morning two girls from the national Social Security Office visited them, giving each a Victory parcel consisting of a bottle of vodka, some tins of fruit, cigarettes and biscuits. Simeon said, "Sometimes one gets depressed and feels one might as well

have lost one's legs in a tram accident, but it's good to know the army hasn't forgotten us."

He told me he gets the highest worker's food ration with extra butter, sugar and fruit. He has set up a one-man shop for repairing electrical gadgets, which he is privileged to do without paying taxes. All over Russia men like these two brothers were being remembered to-day.

While I am doing my daily stint this morning, Iris went off to visit the Botkin Hospital, considered the finest in Moscow; in the afternoon we went to see the Mexican Ambassador, Luis Quintanilla, whom we had known in Washington before the war, in his grandiose new embassy and in the evening we went to Molotov's annual reception in honour of the Red Army. It was a day of nicely shaded contrasts. To begin with, carrot-haired Dr. Frumkin, the chief surgeon at the Botkin, is doing some of the most extraordinary skin-grafting operations, of which he is immensely proud, and no considerations of female modesty prevented him from showing off the results to Iris and to Dina, the Egyptian wife of James Aldridge the Australian novelist, who went with her. Frumkin has specialised in restoring the vital powers of men whose sexual organs have been injured in battle; in two cases which Iris saw he has actually replaced sexual organs which had been entirely lost. The owners of these astonishing accessories, all Red Army officers, displayed them to the foreign visitors without the least self-consciousness, in a spirit of scientific detachment. Frumkin had grafted new organs which he had built up in a series of operations for removing flesh from the stomach. In one case he had actually grafted a scrotum from a patient who had just died on to one of these deficient men. All these operations had been recently performed so that there had not been time to determine whether they would be finally successful. They had already, however, had a marked effect on the morale of the men, who had lost the depression which might be expected to accompany such a condition and felt that life held out some hope to them again.

The doctor explained that one patient had had a relapse because he had attempted sexual intercourse too soon. He maintained, however, that if they were careful at first they might enjoy a normal life again in due course. This contention, I understand, is rejected by American surgeons who have made similar experiments and declare that the artificially built-up tissues are not strong enough to stand normal use. Injuries such as this are few in peace-

time, and then the shock is usually fatal, so that the few who have survived the same ordeal in war and then been treated by Frumkin hardly enable one to generalise on the subject. But Russian doctors, as is known, have done some remarkable jobs of skin-grafting, and I suppose the value of Frumkin's work is that if it *should* prove feasible to rebuild such fragile parts as the sexual organs then it would be an encouragement to proceed with sturdier parts of the body. Though one has the impression that Russian doctors tend to experiments like this for the sheer devilment of the thing. . . .

Luis Quintanilla, who has contrived to furnish the old mansion which the Grand Duke Michael used to maintain on the Leningrad Chaussée for a lady of the ballet out of odds and ends picked up at commission stores, is very Latin and apparently a frivol. He recounted the superb phrase lately used by a mutual acquaintance in Washington to upbraid a third party for that most serious of all breaches of friendship—"Sir, how *dare* you be unfaithful to my wife!" (Life improving upon a Palais Royal farce.) But actually Luis is one of the few ambassadors now here who have made a serious study of Marxism; he has done a good book on Latin-American problems, is an intimate of the American vice-President, Henry Wallace, and if his judgment of the U.S.S.R. is sometimes a little rosy, by God, that is a fault on the right side!

Molotov's reception began at half-past eight and continued, with a concert and dancing, until 4 a.m. next morning. I had never been to a big Soviet entertainment before. I came forewarned of its lavishness; but all my expectations were surpassed. It was held in the mansion in Spiridonovka Street which the Foreign Office uses for such affairs, which contains a series of six or eight saloons *en suite*, some of them beautifully decorated. The ballroom, with its gallery for the orchestra, is lined with white marble. The furniture is all white, with a design of Napoleonic bees in gold on the Empire chairs and sofas. On one wall hangs the enormous painting by Frank Salisbury of the signing of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty in London.

Molotov stood in the ballroom receiving the guests. He and all the other Foreign Office officials there for the first time wore the new black and gold evening uniform of the Soviet Foreign Office. It is a becoming and practical dress—much more successful than the grey uniforms they wear in daytime. There were very few foreign women present; of British and American only four—the

American ambassador's daughter, the wife of our minister and two girl correspondents—Iris and Marjorie Shaw, of the *Daily Mirror*. Their one disappointment was that the marshals of the Soviet Union were not wearing their diamond stars.

Nearly all the Russian women were in evening dress and I saw many a sable cape which would have excited the admiration of women in the West, although on the whole the dresses were not as smart as you would find in other capitals. This was not because the materials were not good but because there is no fashion to speak of—designs rarely alter from year to year and so the general line of dresses might as well have been 1929 as 1944. Many men were in evening dress too though the “intelligentsia,” such as the writers Alexei Tolstoi and Ilya Ehrenbourg and some of the leading actors seemed to prefer lounge-suits. Most of the foreign correspondents were dressed in the same humble way—not having realised that evening-dress is now essential for any foreigner in Russia, at least a few times a year.

After an operatic concert we wandered into the supper rooms, of which there were five. The buffet tables were lavishly spread with sturgeon, caviare, chicken mayonnaise, roast turkey and all kinds of cold meats, hams, and salads. The drinks were red or white wine from the South, vodka in half a dozen varieties, and later there came pink champagne and ice-cream. Between these tapestried walls and gilded ceilings rippling with the light of crystal candelabra one might well have supposed oneself at a pre-war reception in Londonderry House or in Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt's mansion on Fifth Avenue (though this mansion was larger). The difference was that this was a *representative* gathering. Every one who had been invited was here because they did some job which entitled them to be invited. There was no “Society” quota of decorative people who in other lands provide the background against which the real powers in the land manoeuvre. The marshals' wives were invited but not the marshals' friends, nor was there any one present through *pull*, through knowing someone who could wangle an invitation. Had this been the third French Republic, both the marshals' wives and the marshals' mistresses would doubtless have been there: but the U.S.S.R. is correct in such particulars. Invitations were carefully checked at the door and a formidable bunch of N.K.V.D. officers was there to prevent any gate-crashing.

Except for those absent at the front, most of the nation's leaders

were present and all the foreign ambassadors, including of course the Japanese. Molotov had three tables drawn together for a sit-down supper and close to him were sitting Ambassador Harriman and his daughter, the British Ambassador, Fierlinger the Czech ambassador, Wanda Wassilievskaya the leader of the Polish Patriots in the U.S.S.R. and her husband Korneichuk, the foreign commissar of the Ukraine, with General Berling, commanding the Polish troops in Russia with Marshals Budyenny, Voroshilov, Shaposhnikov and the enormously fat Col.-General Scherbakhov, in charge of the political side of the Red Army. Kaganovitch, Mikoyan, Vishinsky and Litvinov were at the same table. When I entered the room the party was getting nicely under way. Toasts were practically continuous. Kaganovitch, in a blue railwayman's uniform, kept leaping up and down and every now and then Molotov would leave the table and clink glasses with others standing around the room. Kathy Harriman, looking slightly disconsolate in a blue dress, was giving moral support to her father, who was battling, so far successfully, against the obvious attempts of Voroshilov and Kaganovitch to involve him in so many toasts that he would disappear under the table. At the previous Molotov party, on November 7th, 1943, our ambassador had struggled against the same nemesis and, after some difficult moments, had managed to leave the building under his own power, which was more than could be said for some of the other guests; but now they were not out to "get" Clark-Kerr. The lean and normally abstemious Harriman was the target for to-night. And it looked as though he would have a very rough passage and strike many a submerged rock before making the safe haven of his own bed at Spasso Dom.

The Poles and Czechs seemed to be the heroes of the top tables. The statuesque Wanda with her Eton crop and appropriate air of an avenging Fury was downing her vodka like a man. They say that because she is married to a prominent Russian it is unlikely that she will hold a high place in liberated Poland: for one thing her husband will have to live in Kiev and she will hardly care to live alone in Warsaw. But she has played a great part in building up friendly feelings towards Russia among the Polish exiles here. When the first Polish division paraded with its new Soviet equipment, it was she who took the salute, wearing a long black cloak. Watching Molotov and Vishinsky clinking glasses with her and patting General Berling on the back one could have little doubt

that in Russian eyes the Polish government in London has ceased to exist and that the Polish groups in Russia will henceforth be the nucleus around which the country will be rebuilt when the Red Army gets to the Vistula.

Presently Kaganovitch and Voroshilov made a tour of the rooms, proposing toasts here and there. I saw Voroshilov, standing on a chair, calling out "Slava" the Red Army in lusty tones—"Slava" the Allies, "Slava" the heroic Soviet people, and so on. When he raised his glass and drained it to the bottom every one clapped. You half-expected he would break it by throwing it against the wall behind him, in the old style. Indeed the sight of this marshal uttering patriotic toasts at the top of his voice was so like some illustration to an old tale about the Napoleonic Wars that one might for a moment have thought oneself back in the Moscow of 1812. Russians who are Marxists still contrive to be incorrigibly Russian: the success of the revolution here seems to have largely weeded out those pale-faced, intense types still met with in international Marxist circles abroad. But then I suppose it is quite logical for revolutionaries, provided they are successful, to become expansive and jolly in their old age. Certainly these two, the commissar and the marshal, are to-night the jolliest old rascals you could hope to meet—there is something almost Pickwickian about them. But I am bound to say I don't care for the looks of Scherbakhov, who facially is Pickwick to the life—but Pickwick played by Charles Laughton, with a sinister edge to the rôle. He is said to be an administrator of genius, still in the early thirties, and some see in him a successor to Stalin as secretary of the Party. But to *visualise* him as chief of state is beyond one's powers: the outer man is but a husk, maybe, yet in a statesman, very important.

Presently Kaganovitch has a serious interlude. Catching sight of Homer Smith, the American negro correspondent, he engages him in conversation about the Rights of Man. A knot gathers round the two of them as the commissar, speaking of the need to protect minority rights, says: "You and I know that well, do we not? I a Hebrew and you a negro—in this country any post is open to us, but in how few parts of the world is that so to-day!"

Kaganovitch is a florid man with a bushy black moustache which gives him the appearance of a voluble French character in a René Clair film. He has strong views, as has Ehrenbourg, about the second front. And a strange thing is that neither of them seem to be in the confidence of Stalin as to what actually was

decided at the Teheran Conference, for although I know that the date of the Invasion was set at Teheran, almost down to the very day, Ehrenbourg has been talking to-night as though it was still quite undetermined and even Kaganovitch, a member of the State Defence Council and an intimate of Stalin (whom they say has married his sister) told our ambassador that he had no idea when the second front would be, or *would* it be? To which Clark-Kerr replied: "I cannot tell you, but surely Marshal Stalin would give you the date."

Kaganovitch told me a little parable to illustrate why he personally was so interested in the second front.

"In the industries for which I am responsible," he said, "they are working day and night, in three shifts. Well, among the United Nations it has been the same thing: at one stage Russia was the only shift that was working full-time, but now the British and American shifts are coming on, we hope, so that the engine of victory will be manned by all three around the clock."

This seemed unexceptionable to me. But I became a little weary when Ehrenbourg got on his usual hobby-horse and suggested that the Allied armies in Italy were going so slow, they did not seem to be "trying." He had heard so much about the Eighth Army, he continued, that he had hoped for bigger things from it in Italy. I told him I had been 18 months with the Eighth Army, when it was still called "The Army of the Nile," and that in point of fact it had advanced a greater distance from there than any Russian army had done at that time. These comparisons between Allies, how odious they are! And yet this fellow Ehrenbourg is very offensive. I wondered why he did not pick on the Americans for a change: after all, from his point of view, they had done even less than the British, but Russians of this kind never go for the Americans—it is perhaps a sense of favours to come that guides them, for certainly we shall have far less to give Russia after the war than will the United States. Again, I have never heard a Red Army man talk like this. They resent the absence of a second front, and they are right to do so, but they understand some of the reasons for it. Maybe Ehrenbourg is *plus Staliniste que Staline* because of past history. Like Alexei Tolstoi, Ehrenbourg is a convert to the Revolution, and a comparatively recent one. Both of them were *émigrés* and wrote violently against the Bolsheviki until finally they made their peace and came home, where they were received with honours.

However, the discussion, though pointed, remained amiable. But a very different scene was presently enacted when the Japanese diplomats, rightly sensing themselves somewhat out in the cold, approached the top tables and tried to make themselves pleasant. I was standing with Iris having a rather unsatisfactory glass of Soviet sherry when a brown hand clutching a bottle of champagne slid beneath my elbow and rested the bottle on the table before me. I looked round to see the Jap naval attaché, an admiral, looped around with gold braid and grinning nervously. He had just primed himself and his aides with champagne. Almost at once another bottle followed the first. Not having got near any champagne thus far, I decided to lift this prize from the enemy. Moving along the table a little, drawing Iris after me, we drew a line of encirclement round the two bottles and charged our own glasses. The Japanese, isolated from their primary objective, seemed about to sidle round the table and take the champagne in the flank when Molotov approached us, holding his glass aloft. Iris and I raised our glasses to him and he acknowledged the greeting. Then the Japanese admiral, planting himself firmly in Molotov's path, stuck out his own glass and tried to clink it with Molotov's. The Japanese mumbled something complimentary but Molotov, murmuring "Excuse me," stepped aside and walked past him without giving him a look.

This was bad enough for Japanese self-esteem. But worse was to come. The thick-skinned admiral attempted to clink his glass against Litvinov's. But the vice-commissar, who had been ambassador to Washington at the time of Pearl Harbour, turned his back upon him and gave him the snub direct.

After this there was a burst of feverish gaiety from the Japanese, who, while I was still groggy from the impact of these events, won back their champagne from right under my nose. But as everybody continued to ignore them they soon stalked out, clanking their swords along the floor in a manner at once pugnacious and quite ridiculous.

March 2, 1944.—Here I am, in the Kremlin for the first time, to report a meeting of the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R. We went in by the Spasski Gate from Red Square. The formalities were not great for me because I had not brought my typewriter; but those correspondents who brought their portables to use in the press-room had them opened by the guards, lest something explosive be hidden inside. I always think how valueless are these

precautions for the determined assassin, like the bomber plane, will always get through. The murderer of Kirov in Leningrad got into his office by means of a regular *propusk* and indeed no one could have suspected him, since he was a member of the Party.

One of the correspondents complains of this delay whereupon an officer of the guard, evidently understanding English, eases himself of pent-up Second Front feeling by telling the searching soldier: "Don't delay the comrade. Can't you see he's an Englishman, so obviously he is not carrying arms?"

I go into what used to be known as the Nicholas Palace which is blazing with light—quite dazzling after the poor illumination in the rest of Moscow. This is not the largest parliament hall in the Kremlin. It is shaped like a very large concert hall with a gallery around the back and a stage draped in scarlet velvet curtains, against which an enormous white marble bust of Lenin stands out stereoscopically. The seats are filled with deputies including numbers of women, mostly motherly-looking souls but one or two quite young and one not more than twenty-five. Most of the delegates are in coats and skirts. One girl wears a scarlet tam o' shanter. The men wear uniform or dark blue lounge-suits. At the rear of the hall, in a sort of pen, sit the foreign ambassadors, Clark-Kerr and Harriman in the front row. Over their heads, in a tiny box, are jammed the foreign press including one Japanese, who has to put up with being stared out of countenance when he is not being ignored. From the gallery shines a flood of light as the cinema-men arrange their spotlights to film the leading personalities as they arrive.

Now through the curtains at the back of the stage steps Zhdanov, the chairman and leader of the Leningrad Communists. He wears Army uniform with gold epaulettes and horn-rimmed glasses. As he takes his seat on the rostrum there enter behind him, to prolonged applause, the leading Party figures of the Russia Federated Republic who also happen to be the national leaders in the war—Kalinin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Mikoyan, Kaganovitch, Schvernink, Scherbakhov and others. They take their seats on the left of the platform and Zhdanov puts the agenda before the meeting. It is agreed to take the budget first, then foreign affairs; finally the conduct of the war.

Maria Vassilievna Saricheva, plump and matronly, is elected deputy chairman and amid applause takes a seat on the rostrum next to Zhdanov. Whilst the first speaker is presenting the budget

estimates the photographers get busy. Never have I seen so many in one hall. The lights sweep over the rostrum like searchlights as still and film men take the deputies from every angle. The reporters taking the official note are all women. They sit under the rostrum and relieve each other frequently, for the speakers plough through their heavy statistics at a great pace and billions and milliards of roubles fly through the air in such a way as to fluster all but the most expert note-taker. After two hours of budget speeches the session adjourns.

Some correspondents are amazed at the absence of any criticism from the floor. But under the Soviet system all the criticism takes place in the committee stage—that is, before the budget is read to the full assembly who, being all of one party, do not criticise what their nominees have already debated and agreed to in committee. A system inconceivable, even so, from our point of view. But there is no doubt that it works here. I saw no expressions of dissatisfaction on the faces of the deputies as they trooped off to an extremely good supper in the adjoining restaurant.

March 12, 1944.—In the depths of a birch forest, with a bright sun gilding the frozen snow, I am watching the first Yugoslav detachment fighting alongside the Red Army receive a silken banner from Stalin before it goes to the front. The place is near Kolomna, 65 miles from Moscow, and the ceremony has all the colour that Russians know so well how to lay on for big occasions. Half a dozen Red Army generals, resplendent in caracul and scarlet hats, are on the reviewing stand which is draped with the flags of the U.S.S.R., Britain, the United States, China, France and the blue, white and red of Yugoslavia with Marshal Tito's red star at the centre. Stalin's flag, splendidly bound with gold braid, carries on it the motto: "Death to the Fascists!—long live the Fatherland!" and is presented by delegates of the All-Slav Committee in the Soviet Union. The chief of the French military mission, General Petit, and General Berling, commanding the Polish Corps in Russia, are on the stand.

Colonel Mark Meritch, commanding the battalion, kisses the flag and displays it to his men, who with one voice recite an oath to be faithful to it. Meritch was an artillery officer fighting the Germans in Yugoslavia. From a prison camp he was drafted to command a Croat battalion of the 100th German division at Stalingrad, where he was captured by the Russians. From a Russian prison camp he suggested that Yugoslav units be formed and he

was given the task of recruiting the first one. Seventy-five per cent of his men were in Soviet prison camps until three months ago. The remainder found their way by devious means from Yugoslavia.

Meritch holds the flag aloft. And now comes the most striking part of the ceremonial. Three officers who have been standing in front of the troops with a table before each of them remove their caps and put on the attire of *padrés*: the tables become altars. They are certainly fighting parsons. Each wears spurs. The first is a Catholic priest, the second an Orthodox and the third a Moslem. In ringing Arabic phrases which echo over the steppe he invokes the blessing of Allah and his Prophet on the flag. Then with their band playing, the Yugoslavs march past. Thirty per cent are Serbs, forty Croats and thirty per cent Slovenes. Their uniforms, made of British and American khaki, are exactly in the style of the Yugoslav army save that the hat badge carries Tito's star. Tommy-gunners, anti-tank gunners trailing their weapons behind Jeeps, and field gunners march past. All are sturdy fellows—good advertisements for the treatment they must have received as Soviet prisoners.

After the parade a twenty-one-year-old Belgrade medical student, Lieut. Krayachevitch, who had been a Komsomol back home, told me he had been treated just the same as the German prisoners at first, receiving 3 hot meals a day including 600 grammes of bread with butter, soup and meat, or if no meat, then tinned food. He had been arrested by the Hungarians for anti-Fascist activities and sent to the Russian front in a Labour battalion. When the Hungarians retreated near Voronesh he hid in a barn and gave himself up when the Red Army arrived. Not more than two per cent of this battalion were Communists, said Krayachevitch. Mihailovitch he regarded as a traitor working with the enemy. As for King Peter, he said, "Had the king done anything real to organise the people against the invaders he might have earned the right to return but while we have been shedding our blood, what have Peter and his men done? I don't think there is any future for the monarchy in Yugoslavia and I don't know any contemporaries who are Monarchists."

These sentiments were repeated by several other officers I spoke to, although I heard no personal animus against the king. Their bitterness was all reserved for Mihailovitch.

Colonel Meritch led 700 of his men over at Stalingrad. When he raised the white flag the Germans fired on him from the rear,

killing 50 of his men but the remainder ran into the Red lines, including the Catholic priest, Don Anton Vais, who said to me: "Holding my cross over my head, I led my boys over to the Russians."

Lieut. Zakuno, a forty-two-year-old textile worker who fought in the International Brigade in Spain, was imprisoned by the French in North Africa and freed by the American invasion, then joined the Eighth Army. He showed me his British paybook and his discharge after 6 months, "in order to be repatriated to Russia," where he had worked for many years.

Lieut. Paul Kovac, a Croat doctor of law from Zagreb University, said he was badly treated in a Hungarian labour battalion and deserted to the Russians in December, 1942. Later some of his friends came over by joining the guerrillas in White Russia and the Ukraine, fighting with them six months or more before the Red Army liberated the area.

The whole camp is decorated as for a holiday with red flags, Allied emblems, portraits of Tito and Stalin and wall newspapers pinned on trees. Large warm dug-outs built of birch seat 50 a time for luncheon at which the Yugoslavs propose many friendly toasts to Britain and America and General Zhukhov, of the N.K.V.D. troops, who organises the Polish, Czech and other foreign detachments in Russia, says in English, "I raise my glass to the Press of the Free World which in this war is proving a very big gun indeed."

Then the Yugoslavs play mandolines, dancing and singing of the beauties of Split and Dalmatia. It was their last gay day before going up the line.

It proved also to be our last gay moment for quite a while. On getting into the bus to travel back to Moscow a chapter of accidents ensued which was almost enough to convince one that the Revolution had failed, that Tchekov was right and that the Russian character really *is* hopeless. There were two Z.I.S. buses, poorly sprung even for the streets of Moscow and quite hopeless for country snowdrifts in the middle of winter, so that before long one broke down and had to be towed by the other. It was freezing hard and getting dark. Before long the second bus, strained by the double load, broke down also. There was a wait of two hours until an American army truck was procured. Instead of piling as many as possible into the truck and driving into Moscow, now less than 60 miles away, the inexperienced Foreign Office man in charge

said he could not possibly abandon both buses; on the other hand he could not take the responsibility of permitting any one to ride in the American truck, lest we "catch our deaths," so the only thing to do was to put every one into one bus and have the truck tow this into Moscow. For several miles the truck stood up manfully to the task: then it, too, came to a halt and could not be moved. The driver had forgotten to put oil into it. It was now after midnight and very few people had brought any food with them (after this I never went on even a local trip near Moscow without taking a tin of bully and a bottle of water with me). We abandoned the vehicles and walked to the nearest village where we went into the post office and lay down on the floor for the night. It was now 2 a.m. Leaning on the counter was a village swain, strumming a mandoline and making love to the postmistress. When the telephone rang, I noticed, she would take about five minutes to answer it. The swain paid her the compliment of being quite uninterested in the twenty foreigners, including an Egyptian and a Chinese female, who lay snoring and rolling into each other on the narrow floor, but kept up his attentions to the postmistress until 4 o'clock in the morning, at which time a fresh truck arrived and we all stumbled out into the moonlight. The postmistress thanked us for our "company." It was boring, she said, to be on night duty in that quiet village, which was why the young man had come to entertain her, but foreigners did not usually come her way.

Still under tow, we rumbled again towards Moscow, arriving at 7 a.m. having taken 26 hours in all for a trip of 110 miles. English and Americans of the party were by this time in a furious temper. The words "inefficiency" and "bureaucracy" flew from mouth to mouth, but a good reporter must add that the Russians present, including one middle-aged woman, were not in the least put out. Staying up all night in the frozen countryside without food had not ruffled their serenity a bit. A complacency annoying in peace-time—but a national asset in time of war.

April 1st, 1944.—Nothing since the war began 33 months ago has thrilled the peoples of Russia so much as the arrival of the Red Army on the frontier of Rumania. The prospect of taking the war into the enemy's territory very naturally fills Russians with joy. When you have flown, as I have, over hundreds of miles between Stalingrad, Voronesh and the Ukraine and seen the land pitted with trenches, anti-tank ditches, destroyed bridges and seen

city after city so laid into ruin that even prodigies of reconstruction will not suffice to heal all the scars in a generation, you understand the lusty satisfaction with which Soviet gunners on the banks of the Pruth are now shelling the enemy over in Rumania.

Some of these gunners were at Stalingrad. For 800 miles behind them they have seen their own land ravaged as though by swarms of monstrous man-eating locusts. Now it is their turn to dish it out and for many a man on the banks of the Pruth to-day these moments must be the greatest of his manhood experience. And there's better to come. Perhaps before many months are out the soil of Germany herself will be cut up by Russian steel and a lesson drilled into Germany that she will not forget for generations.

The Red Army is about to fight on foreign soil for the first time in its history, if one excepts the brief Finnish campaign which most Russians regard as a preventive operation—not the invasion of another land. When the Red Army beat back the Polish "White Guards" right to the gates of Warsaw that was not regarded as a foreign war either, far from it.

How will the Red Army fare abroad? It is going to face much more difficult going now than on the vast plains of Russia.

I put no stock in the theory—"Russians traditionally don't fight abroad as they do on their own soil."

What is true is that they fight differently abroad. The presence of such men as Marshal Shaposhnikov in the inner circle of the High Command is a guarantee that the lessons of Russian military history will be applied to the problems ahead.

At the Frunze Military Academy the foreign campaigns of Suvorov and Kutuzov have been carefully studied. Russian soldiers of that day fought victoriously in Italy, Austria and in the Alps. In 1812 Kutuzov's cautious tactics, cunningly letting the weather fight for him and sometimes not bothering to attack Frenchmen whom he calculated were going to perish from starvation anyhow, wore down the *Grande Armée* and saved Russia. Yet when Bonaparte fled and the Emperor Alexander decided to follow him up into Europe, it was recognised that different tactics were called for and so Kutuzov, despite his triumph, was removed from the command. The continuity of military theory which persists to-day in the Red Army assures us that if new methods, or even new men are required for the European campaign that looms ahead, they will certainly be forthcoming.

In fighting abroad the Red Army will enjoy one great advantage

vis-à-vis civilians, and that is its stern discipline. Russian soldiers abroad do a bit of shopping but otherwise associate little with civilians. They don't need to because they bring with them their own amenities. Their life is complete within the Army. Senior officers are permitted to take their wives with them in Russia and since there are plenty of girl soldiers of all arms, the soldier is not bereft of feminine company, even on active service.

This removes one frequent source of friction with foreign populations. If Russians are boisterous, their high spirits are confined to their own milieu. The Russians have stated more than once that they don't intend to destroy German cities, as Russian cities have been destroyed. They will hang war criminals but deal kindly with the small folk whom Fascism has enslaved. As to politics, the Red Army will have the advantage that there is no dubiety about the principles for which the U.S.S.R. stands. Yet, as the recognition of Badoglio shows, the Red Army's first concern is to defeat the enemy, not to promote political meetings at street corners.

O D E S S A

April 11th, 1944.—General Tolbuchin's army is making rapid progress into the Crimea, led by a number of officers who stormed the Perekop Isthmus under the Bolshevik leader Frunze in 1920. Frunze's campaign against the Whites in the Crimea was perhaps the hardest which the young Red Army had to undertake and when we remember that the Germans in October, 1941, failed to take Sebastopol even with 6 infantry divisions, 1 cavalry brigade, several S.S. regiments and hundreds of tanks we can see that if the German command possessed the resources, they could make the Crimea a very tough nut to-day. After a siege of 250 days the Germans still required 300,000 men with over 400 tanks and 900 aircraft to fight their way into Sebastopol. Is there any likelihood of such a feat being repeated? I think not the slightest, for the Crimea now has to be supplied from the Rumanian port of Constantza or the Bulgar port of Varna. Moreover, Tolbuchin has left nothing to chance. No Red Army operation since the war began was more painstakingly planned than this assault on Perekop.

For five months his scouts and artillery experts nosed about the German defences which covered every yard of the 8-mile wide isthmus into great depth. They made innumerable table models of the defences and in the rear Tolbuchin's troops trained on full-scale models of the isthmus, which were built secretly in the Ukraine. Officers who, having fought over the isthmus with Frunze, knew every inch of the ground, did the training and commanded the actual assault.

"Listening to these veterans," says a report from the front, "the men swore they would not disgrace the memories of their fathers."

Parts of Odessa were still burning to-day but although the Germans blew up the port area and set most of the warehouses on fire, the demolitions were less terrible than had been feared. Fighting broke out between Germans and Rumanians when the Russians broke into Feldmann boulevard and began firing down into the harbour where hundreds of the enemy were trying to

get away by sea. The German rearguard was chased down the famous staircase which filmgoers the world over know from the battle scenes in the picture "Battleship Potemkin." Although all the evacuation boats were Rumanian, the Germans crowded into them and began throwing the Rumanians out. Eye-witnesses say the Germans fought the Rumanians with their fists and the hapless lesser breed had to embark in small boats and even in rafts.

April 13, 1944.—Took off in a big Douglas to-day for Odessa. Iris was very disappointed that there was no room for her and compensated herself in some measure by going to the first night of the revival of *The Sleeping Princess* at the Bolshoi which, it seems, was a splendid affair, with Semyonova dancing her best and the Transformation scene in the middle out-drurying Drury Lane and lasting half an hour.

We came down at Kharkov and again at Dnepropetrovsk, where we picked up a fighter escort. In a little over four hours we found ourselves circling over a village not far from the mouth of the River Bug, which turned out to be Noviya Odessa. A flare was shot up from the ground and we proceeded to land on an open field slanting rather alarmingly up on to the downs at the back of the village. This was a temporary aerodrome from which the Douglas could not take off with a full load, so we knew we would have to fly back from some other field.

Noviya Odessa did not look far from Odessa on the map; making a detour to avoid the *lemans*, or lakes, near Odessa and passing through the town of Beresovka the distance was just 85 miles. So it was with something of a shock that we learned it would be impossible to make Odessa that night. Although it was barely lunch-time, we settled down to spend the night in Noviya Odessa.

General Alexander Rogov, of General Malinovsky's staff, met us and led us down into the village where we were quartered in some peasant cottages. The "village" was in fact a small town of 14,000 people covering a large area; but as there were no streets and each cottage stood on its own patch of from one to two acres, it had a completely rural air. The crowing of a cock and the distant barking of a dog were the only sounds that impinged on the rhythm of our boots as we squelched along the muddy lanes. The Ukrainian peasants are proud of the mud into which their rich "black earth" is turned by winter, and no doubt it is wonderfully fertile but to an army in the field it is sheer misery. Rogov,

the possessor of a typical Russian figure, chunky and sturdy-thighed, ploughed through the mire at the head of a troupe of wallowing correspondents. His grey caracul hat with its crimson and gold top was splashed with mud.

I was quartered in the cottage of a peasant named Katchuk, from whom the Rumanians had stripped everything.

Katchuk was ill. He lay curled up on the stove and his groans kept me awake most of the night. His wife, a gaunt woman with a healthy bronzed face, walked about barefoot. The cottage consisted of one large room and two small ones and it was spotlessly clean. In the living-room, where I was to sleep, there was no furniture at all. Some soldiers brought an old sofa in from a neighbouring house and I slept on that.

Mrs. Katchuk wore the one serge dress which she had left after 2½ years of enemy occupation. Their orchard and the acre and a half of personal land around the cottage was untilled for they had no implements with which to cultivate it. The collective farm to which Katchuk belonged had also had all its implements removed.

Mrs. Katchuk showed me a photograph of her only son, his Red Army paybook and his last letter home.

"He was twenty-five when we last heard from him, in June, 1941, at Smolensk," she said. "Never a word since. He taught school. He planned to go to the academy and to get on in the world. Well, came the war and now it's all over. . . ."

The poor woman seemed anxious to talk about her tragedy because she could now do so freely. She had feared to admit that her son was in the Red Army when the Rumanians ruled the village as part of their now deflated little empire of "Transdnistria," as they called the lands between the Rivers Dniester and Bug. Along the river bank through the village there had been Rumanian frontier posts and Rumanian and German guards stood looking at each other. Rumanian was the official language and the bureaucrats from Bucharest, up till Stalingrad at least, really seemed to think that Transdnistria was going to be theirs for good.

I kept seeing the word "Colonial" along the road. There was the Café Colonial, the Colonial Provision Stores and so on.

But behind the Rumanians, lurked always the Gestapo. In the village I saw a peasant boy who had cut the tendons of his right hand in order to avoid deportation to Germany. About 50 per

cent of the villagers remained after the occupation. The village was not badly damaged because the enemy had retreated too fast to burn all the houses, which with their solid walls and red roofs looked more prosperous than those in North Russia. The soil is, of course, wonderfully rich and although one saw vast fields which had been untilled for two years, with the old stubble still in them, the gardens were mostly cultivated and the peasants, although wretched, had not starved. It must be difficult to starve in the Ukraine, come plague or come Hitler. Few of the peasants had any shoes and their clothing was pitiful. Some of the infants born since the occupation were toddling about in garments made from old tablecloths or bedspreads.

"In villages like this the Rumanians behaved like gypsies, or like speculators, as we would call them," said General Rogov. "They boasted that Rumania was rich while Russia was poverty-stricken but their actions belied their words for they stole the chickens, the household utensils, why, they even stole the washing off the line."

"Pity you came now," the general continued, in the tones of a man talking about his garden. "A week ago the mud was *really* something. I wore out two pairs of boots; this is my third in the month."

But the roads are still something to tremble over, as we found the next morning.

Roads? They were mostly just cart-tracks, sometimes just impressions made on ploughed land by wheels which had passed over before us. The one good road to Odessa had not been de-mined and all the bridges were down, so we had to make a long detour over open country. We travelled in two big American trucks but the mud which had dried into ruts two feet deep demobilised one of them after we had been going six hours and the whole party had to crowd into the one truck remaining. It was to be 14 hours before we got into Odessa and half of us spent the time standing on the feet of the other half while the truck wallowed across the fields and over downland scattered with windmills.

We crossed the Bug on a ferry made of pontoons, rowed by soldiers and carrying four big trucks at a time. A lot of cavalry were crossing at the same time followed by those rickety-looking little wagons drawn by two horses which are considerably more efficient than they look. With two peasant soldiers on the box and

carrying feed for the animals in addition to other loads, they were proving the backbone of the Red Army in these parts. They even carried bridge-building materials. At one point a bridge 897 yards long was thrown over the Bug in 36 hours by sappers who brought up everything on these little horse-wagons. General Cheykov of Stalingrad fame helped the sappers to build this one himself and when it was found that the existing materials were short by 11 yards, he went out foraging himself for wood and was the first across in his jeep. The bridge completed, the general had a wagon-load of vodka brought so that all the sappers could refresh themselves.

Not far from the track we were following, air reconnaissance had revealed a strange village which was not marked on the maps. It turned out to be a disguised German ammunition dump abandoned by the enemy and containing no less than 1700 rail wagon-loads of ammunition—enough to permit the Russians to use all the German guns they had captured on this sector for a long while to come.

Moving up in the wake of Malinovsky's advance one was first struck by the enormous numbers of dead horses along the German line of retreat. There was a dead horse every hundred yards so that all day long we were assailed by the same deadly sweet odour. In the afternoon there came rain which swiftly turned the soil into glue. We ploughed on, throwing up dirt like a hippopotamus. A cloud of steam exuded from so many damp bodies packed so closely together. Edward Angly, one of the American correspondents, beguiled the hours by reading his Russian primer aloud. "Ma-ma Doma. . . . Pa-pa ne doma . . . kak delaet Pa-pa?" he intoned with schoolmasterly persistence, until a score of voices told him just what Pa-pa was up to and why Ma-ma would not see him in the Do-ma again.

We went through the village of Catherinenthal, colonised by Germans under Catherine the Great. Its neat cottages and Lutheran church were completely destroyed, for these Russianised Germans, even after the lapse of 150 years, had left the Ukraine with the Nazis. We passed over a main railway where there were hundreds of French and German railway wagons abandoned, then past a railway junction where the sidings had been devastated by Stormovik bombing. It was a good chance to judge the efficacy of Soviet bombing. It has been said that you can't knock out railways from the air but here was the exception. Between this smashed

bottleneck and the sea I saw several hundred Rumanian and German oil-tank cars—quite whole, which the enemy had not been able to draw into safety to the west. The sidings, a mile long and eight tracks wide, had been utterly smashed.

General Rogov kept up a running commentary on the German Army as he went along. Nobody, he said, could say just what a German division was to-day. It might be 6000 before a battle and 2000 afterwards. He knew of one division which had actually 200 men in it. This skeleton was kept together presumably for reasons of morale, or because it looked well on an operational map. The "Viking" motorised division was completely demolished at Khorsun-Shevchenkovsky. The general commanding, who got away in a plane, was the only man to escape. But an entirely fresh "Viking" division had now been built up around this general. A German division to-day might mean 7000 men or it might mean 4000 or less; *all* were depleted.

Darkness fell before Odessa was in sight and we rolled forward at a reduced speed without showing a pinprick of light, although other Red Army units we passed seemed not to bother about enemy aircraft at all, but careered over the downs with their headlights blazing. A captain I spoke to at a road-barrier told me his men never bothered to disperse their vehicles now. "So long since enemy planes bothered us we call them boll-weevils now when they do appear," he said. A collective farm joke into which I was unable to enter. . . .

It was after midnight when we struck the smooth road from Nikolayev to Odessa and rolled into the city in comfort. We stopped at a hotel which had lost most of its windows and although this was April on the Black Sea the night was deathly cold. We went to bed without supper, wearing all our clothes. I had a blanket under me and one above and lay down in a fur coat and gloves, my boots and a fur cap. The night breeze came straight off the sea through the broken shutters. There was no water except for an old vodka bottle which had been filled from a water-cart and from this one had to wash, shave and quixotically try to make the lavatory work next morning.

Fortunately we had had a solid Red Army breakfast 14 hours before because, except for some bread and cheese on the road, we were to eat nothing until an equally handsome Army meal, beginning with ham and vodka, was laid before us at 10 o'clock the next morning.

General Nikolai Sordienko, an old Czarist general who had fought all the way from Stalingrad, was there to share it with us. Under crisp white hair he had a face like an old lion and a sardonic expression, rather like Marshal Shaposhnikov. After the ham came a wonderful Ukrainian soup. A plump Red Army girl circulated around the crowded table and shouted into Sordienko's ear above the conversation, "Pass the Borsch down, please, comrade general!"

And as the Borsch passed down into frozen interiors we began to forget that we were sitting there in fur-coats and caps. A normal human glow crept back. Then, when we got out into the street and walked along the terrace which overlooked the ruined and burned-out harbour, the southern sun rose high and warm; the people came out of the bombed buildings and they were Southern people, wearing cotton clothes, so that you forgot the Russian cold of the night and began to look forward to a Grecian day.

April 15, 1944.—I am standing in the midst of the Catacombs 100 feet underneath the city of Odessa, in the headquarters of the most extraordinary guerrilla army which the Russian war has yet brought to light. Here, as in a tale of Dumas, 10,000 partisans lived secure against interference because there are so many secret entrances to the 100 miles of passages which were dug when limestone was removed for the building of the city 150 years ago, that the enemy never knew them all. He never dared to crawl down the narrow holes he did know because of the thousands of armed men who lurked beneath. The guerrillas terrorised the Rumanian street patrols at night, hid Jews and other hunted people below: and all this thanks to arms which they stole, or even bought, from venal Rumanian and German soldiers.

There was a fixed tariff for arms: rifles, 100 occupation marks; revolvers, 150 marks; tommy-guns, 250 marks; hand-grenades, bread varying in quantity with the time of year. Several hundred Slovaks deserted from the German Army, bringing to the Catacombs tommy-guns and even a few machine-guns: a few Frenchmen deserted from the German Army, too. Finally, about 50 per cent of the guerrillas were armed. Their leader told me that had 100 per cent obtained arms, they could have retaken the city; as it was, they ruled the streets at night.

It was the guerrilla leader, Anatole Loschenko, and his deputy, Dmitri Gaschin, who brought me down here. I met them in a house in the old working-class district called Moldavanka. I climbed up a wooden staircase from a courtyard which, with its

flowering shrubs and its wine-barrel, might have been in Greece, into a well-kept bed-sitting room where the two had lived. The pictures were tied up in gay ribands and there were flowers on the sill, for the room had been decorated for the Orthodox Easter, after the old style. Here we had some tea. Then they took me through the yard into the house next door and, opening a trap-door in the kitchen, we slid down a sharp incline and then had to crawl through a shallow tunnel for about 60 feet, on our hands and knees. We emerged in the Guerrillas' guard-room where they lodged the prisoners they took in the city at night. It was a chamber hewn out of the stone about 20 feet high. Next to it was another chamber about the same size which was the headquarters room: a large-scale map of the city was on the wall, divided into operational areas in regular military style. Opening out of this was a small room where a girl chemist named Semenova had worked for months making Molotov Cocktails. Next I passed through the radio room where there was a printing press where illegal leaflets were printed; then came the bakery where enough bread was produced each day to feed thousands of people, next a hospital chamber, then a sausage-making plant, then an artesian well. I passed through innumerable rooms fitted with double-decker bunks for the guerrillas. All this accommodation had been tested to the full just before Odessa was retaken, at which time 16,000 people were living below ground.

Holding a smoking naphtha bottle, Loschenko drew me through hundreds of yards of passages and warned me to stay close, as once one became separated one might never be found in the labyrinth, which is so extensive that it had never been completely mapped. As we walked along he told his story.

After Stalingrad, he said, they realised that the enemy would have to retreat rapidly and that the lives of thousands who were still useful to the Germans as labour would be taken when the town was given up. About that time the enemy committed a number of atrocities which convinced even the most cautious that they would butcher people without compunction when the time came. What drew the Resistance together more than anything was the arrival in Odessa of several trainloads of Russian children whose mothers had been deported to Germany and their blood taken to feed German Blood Banks. Some of the children were dying, others so weak they could hardly get out of the train.

"This made us mad," said Loschenko, "and it was then that

our guerrilla organisation was born. At that time it was dangerous for a man to walk the streets lest he be picked up for deportation to Germany, so we had to rely on our women. They foraged for food or stole it. Children were good at stealing too; gradually we built up a big store of tinned food in the catacombs. By day those of us who had work continued in our usual jobs but at night we went down into the catacombs to prepare for zero hour. We printed leaflets warning the Rumanian police that if they killed a Russian they too would be killed. The city was divided into areas, with a guerrilla band in each. At night we were out on the streets killing sentries. I was in command down below. They called me the Major, though I had no military rank and at that time we were not in contact with the Red Army. Once in Area Seven, a German police detachment, 67 strong, which came to burn down some houses as a reprisal was engaged in pitched battle by a big guerrilla detachment. All were disarmed. We took the whole 67 of 'em into the catacombs and kept them there all the time until the Red Army arrived. We didn't kill prisoners . . . oh no, it was quite a model régime down there. A lot of the enemy wandered into our web; it was quite easy for one man at a time to enter the catacombs but nobody ever left there without our knowledge."

Here Loschenko paused to wipe some mildew from the wall off his neat blue suit. Loschenko was about forty, a pleasant, intellectual type; his companion Gaschin was proletarian and excitable. Gaschin still felt the strain of his experiences, for he burst out: "God, how we hated those bastards! And don't let any one tell you the Rumanians were better than the Germans. We found them worse; they were more cowardly, and so more cruel. They treated us absolutely as colonials, you know. Antonescu came here twice; he stayed at the Bristol, where you are staying, and did they have to guard him! All round the hotel was cordoned by the police."

Gaschin seized hold of my arm and said with great vehemence: "There was no Communist propaganda about our effort—get that straight."

Loschenko looked at him rather askance, but said nothing.

"I'm not a Party man at all," Gaschin continued. "It was pure patriotism and hatred of the invaders that united every one. By God, if you people in the West had learnt to hate as we have you'd have finished your war long ago!"

Neither leader would say much about the rôle played by the

old underworld in Odessa, but I believe it was considerable. In Czarist days Odessa was notorious for her gangsters, who operated from the catacombs. At the start of the Soviet régime, the gangsters for the most part aided the Reds against the Whites but once the new régime was consolidated it had to tame these desperadoes, try to make respectable citizens out of them. It never completely succeeded. Expeditions against the Rats of the Catacombs had to be undertaken periodically. The Soviet authorities tried gas, water and explosives to wrinkle hidden criminals out but no method was entirely effective and right up to the war, it was always possible for a few wanted men to go into hiding in the Catacombs. But when the Germans came, the Odessa underworld proved as patriotic as any other section of society: they knew all the tricks and turns of the underground city, all the exits and entrances. Most of them joined the Partisans. The City Soviet had tried mining a portion of the tunnelling to prevent it being used by the gangsters. Gaschin told me, rather curiously, that a few boys from the local Pioneers (Communist boy scouts) knew where these mines were, and undertook to remove them, but in doing so one of the boys was killed.

All the partisan dead were buried in the catacombs. The password was changed daily but occasionally spies managed to get in. Once a Russian girl got in on the plea that she was a parachutist come from "the Mainland." She said she had orders for them not to resist openly as the time was not ripe.

"This seemed phoney to us," Gaschin said, "so we got her drunk one night down there. Then it all came out. She was working for the Rumanian Gestapo, the 'Seguranza.' The Rumanians had taken her family as hostages and to save their lives she was spying for them. Well, we kept her down there until the Red Army came. We didn't kill traitors. We just kept them prisoner until the army came."

At the turn of a passage we came across a man named Peter Yalkin, standing guard on an ammunition dump. He saluted the "Major" in neighbourly fashion. Posing as a locksmith during the day, he had kept a little shop over one of the main exits. Two days before the Russians arrived the Germans discovered this place and 200 soldiers surrounded the house and blew it up. The women in the house would have been killed had the guerrillas not rushed up and dragged them below. The explosion bared a gaping hole into the tunnel. The Germans threw grenades into it. But they dared not go down. All the entrances were so narrow that only

one man could crawl done at a time. Consequently a whole army could have been picked off one by one, had they tried to enter.

When we climbed back into the street a military funeral was passing. They were burying Captain Feodor Kotkov, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, who had been killed on a secret mission behind the lines just before Odessa was taken. The partisan leaders whipped off their hats and stood to attention. The coffin, swathed in scarlet, lay on a military truck, which was piled up with flowers. The guard of honour was formed by anti-tank guns. In front a Red Army band marched, playing Chopin's funeral march. Instead of a cross, a large Red Star was suspended over the body of the dead hero. Two Tommy-gunners with their arms at the "present" stood rigidly on guard in the truck. A long procession of townsfolk followed the coffin. There were many young girls, and all of them were weeping.

The procession passed a column of German prisoners shuffling by, guarded by a posse of young Communists armed with shotguns. The Germans averted their eyes from the funeral, gazing humbly at the ground. (There were still a lot of Germans at large and on my way back to the hotel I was halted several times and asked for my papers.) A crowd collected around these prisoners, who looked terrified but trying not to show it. One of the young Communists elbowed the people back, calling: "You've seen the B . . . for two years—haven't you had your fill of them yet?"

I went to the City Soviet, which had once been the stock exchange, to see the mayor, Boris Davidenko. He said there were about 250,000 people in the city now, against 737,000 before the war. Thirty-three per cent of the population had been Jewish; as many as possible had been evacuated but of those remaining nearly all were slaughtered in a "Vernichtungs Lager" in a nearby village, and not more than 3000 Jews were alive in Odessa at that moment. Those who escaped did so by means of false passports. The mayor is himself a Jew.

I asked him why the Russians had not altered their passport system when they saw the war coming. He said there had not been time; but the fact remains that the Soviet government committed an appalling blunder by its passport regulations before the war which were in fact responsible for thousands of Jews losing their lives. The personal passport which every citizen carries listed the citizen's "nationality"—"Russian" if he came from the R.S.F.S.R., "Ukrainian" if from the Ukrainian S.S.R., and so on. As anti-

Semitism was a most serious crime, the generality of Jewish citizens, far from concealing their origin, were for the most part proud to insert "Jewish" as descriptive of their nationality. A man like Kaganovitch, who in England might have changed his name to Kirkpatrick before reaching eminence in the state, was wont to describe himself as a "Hebrew" and was so described on his passport. Millions of less distinguished Jews did the same. The result was that whenever the Nazis arrived in a Russian town they had only to order a check-up of all Soviet passports to discover at once who was Jewish and who was not: their set policy was to kill all Communist Party members and Soviet officials as soon as they took over an area. Then it was the turn of the Jews. That is the basic reason why hundreds of thousands of Jews have been killed in Russia, for otherwise it would have been impossible in most cases for the Germans to have picked them out: under Soviet rule the Jews became well assimilated and old racial characteristics were not evident.

However, two years of Nazi rule in the Ukraine have reintroduced the poison of anti-Semitism in Russia. With extreme care the Germans inculcated the idea that they only killed "Jews and Communists": that if other Russians gave these people up they would have nothing to fear for themselves. Amid the general demoralisation of people who have lived for any time under the Nazis the evil of anti-Semitism is not very marked in Russia to-day, but to some slight extent the Germans' efforts to revive it have met with success and the Soviet government is out to suppress it with even more rigour than before.

In Moscow the other day an old woman became involved in an argument in a queue, at which two rude little urchins called out, "Yah, lousy old Jewess!" or some such epithet. A friend who was there tells me that at once a shocked silence fell upon the queue. For a moment no one spoke. Then the old woman called a Militiaman and repeated, before witnesses, what the boys had said. The urchins were immediately arrested.

Again, I know personally of a man who, when the Germans were approaching Moscow in 1941, spoke at a meeting at his works to the effect that he thought it shameful to evacuate the city and that he, a Russian, proposed to remain in Moscow come what might—no matter what his colleagues did. Many of his colleagues were Jewish and this speech was taken as an insinuation that it was the Jews who wanted to evacuate, while the non-Jews were ready

to stay behind. The man was arrested on a charge of propagating anti-Semitism; he was removed to a work camp in the East and did not succeed in clearing himself for a very long while.

It will be very interesting to see what Soviet policy will be towards Jewish resettlement at the peace conference. If Litvinov is a delegate, something positive may well emerge, for Litvinov has stayed in Palestine and understands well the needs of refugee Jews even though the Soviet Union never was enthusiastic over Palestine as a Jewish national home and is now become a power in the Middle East, where projects for Arab Union are entertained. The Soviet offer of Birobijan as a place for Jewish settlement bore a weak fruit. This frontier republic required a pioneering stock to make it a success, and even then was too remote from markets. However, Litvinov in the name of his government may have another contribution to make. The mass evacuation of Russian people beyond the Urals when Hitler was driving on Moscow has caused a transfer of populations which will in many cases be permanent. Where whole factories have been transplanted intact the workers have settled down in their new surroundings and the government after the war will encourage them to stay. This leaves areas in western Russia less densely populated than before, especially for example the Volga German Republic whose people were evacuated for security reasons early in the war and have not moved back. The Volga German Republic compares very favourably with Palestine as a place of settlement and it would not be a surprise if the Russians should offer to receive Jews there. While war was raging deep in Russia, the Soviets could not offer a haven to oppressed Jews not only because of the difficulty of feeding them but also because of the ease with which the enemy could have smuggled in spies in the guise of Jewish refugees. But when the war is over Russia will have nothing more to fear from Germany in this respect and so a hospitable policy towards European Jews may become possible.

In the City Soviet I met a priest of the Uspensky Cathedral, Father Vassili, who had been a school teacher under the Rumanian occupation. Rumanian was compulsory in all schools, he said.

He was amusing on the subject of the Rumanian clergy—"the Patriarch Vissarion, from Cernauti, was inducted into the city with a great military parade—just like a Pope," he added, with great distaste. But finally the Rumanian Patriarch left, "with one

suitcase, riding in a droshky." The governor, Alexianu, was a great ladies' man and was dismissed for embezzlement. "Our funds he spent not for social needs," said Vassili, "but on pretty legs; and the budget could not stand it."

By January there was a noticeable spread of Bolshevik ideas among the Rumanians, the priest added, and shortly after the Germans came back as they feared the Rumanians would make contact with the Russians. From then until the town fell the terror, more efficiently organised by the Gestapo, became far worse.

Leaving the town hall, I strolled around the town by myself. Citizens were digging enormous graves for the German baggage horses which lay dead, and disgustingly swollen, in the streets. Three cheerful girls leaned out of the Municipal Registry Bureau, taking the sun.

One said, "We've been registering only deaths so far—until just this morning. Three couples came in to get married."

On the promenade, near the cannon captured from the British warship *Tiger* which shelled Odessa in 1854, I met a very odd customer. He was not more than thirty, blond, well-dressed, and smoking a pipe. He gave his name as "Joe Smith," said he came from Canada, was brought back to Russia by his Russian-born father in his teens, and wished he had never left Alberta.

"What a bloody awful country this is," he exploded. Some Red Army officers were in hearing, though he was speaking English. "I could tell you a thing or two. The Germans? Good fellows, I say. Under them I had a good job; had my own shop, selling electrical gadgets. Much better life than I had under the Soviets, I can tell you."

And he went on in the same strain. "Joe Smith" has no special significance: he was a collaborationist and I dare say his subsequent shrift was short. Perhaps he wanted to speak his piece before being arrested. I include his remarks for the sake of light and shade, to show that not every inhabitant of Odessa was overjoyed over the Liberation.

I went over the Opera House, the entrance to which had for some absurd reason been mined by the Germans. The manager assured me that every time the Germans laid mines here, "my devoted actors came by night" and lifted them again—an almost Biblical allusion. The Rumanians, he said, stole all the properties and sets from the theatre, and over 100 complete operatic scores for the orchestra. These items subsequently figured in the bill for

reparations which Russia presented to the Rumanian Government.

Along their line of retreat, which ran appropriately down "Marshal Antonescu Avenue" through a dreary suburb, the Germans had done a masterly job of demolition. When they learnt that the road to Ovidopol had been cut, they jammed the street for a full mile with lorries, six abreast, and set fire to the entire bloc. Thousands of vehicles were burned out and it looked as though it would take weeks to clear the road.

In a public bath-house in an Odessa suburb we found 570 prisoners awaiting sorting. Some of them were deserters who had joined the guerrillas in the catacombs; some had actually lived with Odessa girls and succeeded in finding work as civilians.

In the sun-dappled street outside the prison, shaded by magnolias and with bougainvillea staining the white walls, tables and chairs were placed as for a *festa*. Then out came the prisoners in batches. The first 25 were Germans, out of 203 within. It is difficult to convey the sour impression which these Germans made upon one. Only two were arrogant; many were servile; but not one seemed to have any real sense of shame or guilt. All had slick excuses to offer. When all were lined up General Rogov asked whether any of them could explain why the German Army had committed atrocities. Silence. Then a tough baby named Scholl, born in Luxembourg, held up his hand, as at school, and stepped forward.

"Because we are retreating, we have orders to deprive the enemy of anything useful," he said. "As to killing women and children, what the Germans have done has been greatly exaggerated by French and English propaganda. As a Luxembourger I consider I'm neutral and entitled to my own opinion. Personally, I never killed any one."

"You don't have to believe them," interposed General Rogov. "They are most of them liars."

Asked whether the Germans had heard of the Kharkov Atrocity Trial, Scholl replied belligerently, "Yes, they did, and they thought it a damned disgrace."

Next, a studious type with horn-rims and a rather Jewish appearance, announced himself as Junior Doktor Hans Goebel of Hamburg, a deserter. He waited to surrender to the Red Army because he wanted to be a doctor in the U.S.S.R. after the war. He could not quite bring himself to pronounce the awful words, "I am a Communist," but, hesitating on the brink, compromised by saying, "My dear old father, when he was alive, was a Red."

A fellow doctor called Peter Ritser, from Chemnitz, said he too deserted because he saw the situation was hopeless and he wanted to be a doctor in the Red Army.

Private Erik Spielmann, 47, barked at me like a dog. "My mother, wife, two kids in British raid on Leipsic, December 14, 1943, killed all together were. I am now quite alone."

He had worked in German aircraft factories and seen for himself how far production was falling behind. When he was called up and sent to the Kuban in the infantry he realised he was backing a loser, "and as I don't like to lose, I gave myself up."

Hermann Petz, 23, an infantryman in France, was sent to the 7th Punishment Battalion for "loose political talk and not sharing the views of the masses," but despite this he did not desert, but was captured in the field.

Grenadier Hans Scheink, a childish fair youth of 20—very much the type that is preferred by plump, mature pederasts in the Gestapo—was wounded on the Ingulets and ran away from hospital to hide in a private house in Odessa.

General Rogov patted him kindly on the head saying, "And how many Red soldiers did you kill, my boy?"

Alternately smiling and trembling, Scheink replied, "Please sir, not one. I was only at the front 8 days."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Rogov, laughing heartily. "It really is rich—you never find one who admits having hurt a fly!"

Next, like a breath of clear air, came 9 Frenchmen from Alsace, all deserters. They smiled and chattered excitedly when we spoke French to them and asked how soon they could join de Gaulle. They had been forced into the Rumanian Army. Six had fought for France in 1939-40, and proudly showed their demobilisation papers.

A handsome lad, Marcel A——, said he spent a month in transit from Poland to Nikolaev but never reached the front. He and a friend deserted and were hidden by two Soviet girls who, he said, "were charming to us when they learnt we were French." The girls hid them for four days in their cottage but had to turn them out on the fifth day because a posse of German officers, known as "soldier thieves," were rounding up stragglers and putting them in the front line. The two Frenchmen were hidden in a peasant's cottage for the next night, surrendering when the Russians arrived and giving their rifles "as a contribution" to the partisans. Marcel said the food was not bad in the Russian prison but all they wanted

was to change their uniforms—"we are ashamed to wear these lousy things any longer."

Another Frenchman, Jean S——, joined the partisans in the Catacombs. With two Russian partisans he went out in German uniform and stole three rifles and two machine-guns.

Joseph K——, another Frenchman who was a wine grower before the war, said they had been placed in the Rumanian artillery because the Rumanians were short of experienced gunners. The Rumanians, to his surprise, treated them fairly well, "perhaps in memory of our alliance of old days."

Without any instruction from General Rogov, we had been distant with the Germans, but now we gave the Frenchmen cigarettes and promised to do what we could to get them released. (Some months after, all the Frenchmen taken prisoner in Russia were repatriated.) The Frenchmen walked back behind bars crying "Vive la France" and smiling broadly. All except the youngest, who wept.

Next emerged 16 raggle-taggle Rumanians with a wistful elderly lieutenant, like Quixote, at their head. His uniform was shoddy and his insignia had been torn off. All said they had heard a Rumanian unit was being formed in Russia and that they wanted to join it—to fight the Germans and Hungarians, but not, they added, their own folk back in Rumania. The officer, Georges Gradinaru, showed me a Soviet leaflet promising safe conduct. He complained, "The Germans insulted us in every way and called us gipsies." I exchanged glances with General Rogov, who turned up his eyes in mock sanctity, as though *he* had never heard the word gipsy in his life.

The comedian of the party turned out to be a former Bucharest taxi-driver with a face like a funny man in burlesque who piped up: "To hell with this! I want to go home."

And what kind of home do you expect to go to? he was asked.

"I wish Carol was back again, I do. Those were the days. And Madame Lupescu now, she was a real lady. Often have I driven her in my cab."

Last we spoke with two privates from Slovakia, wearing Red stars on their German uniforms. They had lived for two weeks in the catacombs and had fought the Germans in the streets, relying only on the red stars to avoid unfortunate mistakes when they encountered Partisans who might not know them—a double-

dyed brand of courage the like of which I had never encountered before.

And while we were talking in that sunny street, under a pearly spring sky, a Red Army column came swinging along, singing at the tops of their voices. The prisoners crowded against the bars to see, and some of the pinched and dirty faces looked bashful as the sound swelled up, powerful and victorious. But in the German faces I read no shame—merely a veiled look of watchfulness—like culprits who have been caught once, but are looking for a chance of doing it again.

April 17, 1944.—Going behind the scenes of the German war theatre, I inspected the defences which the Germans put up against a sea landing on a beach that might have been any one in Normandy. It was a beach called "New Arcadia," 400 yards across between cliffs and a few miles west of Odessa, and it was fascinating to be, as it were, on the inside looking out of a German defence system. The beach itself did not look very formidable; there were underwater mines and two rows of wire; but in the glen that led inland the defences were truly intimidating. The Germans had feared the sailors of the Black Sea Fleet might land here to encircle Odessa. The bathing pavilions near the shore were turned into defence posts, their windows concreted up. There were four pillboxes on one side of the glen and six on the other; at the head were two positions for big guns, now empty. All this for one beach!

When I got back to Moscow I found the British military mission extremely interested in this beach, as well they might be, on the eve of the second front. Here was an opportunity to see a German defensive position of the latest type and but recently occupied, at close hand. But unfortunately the Russians never invited our military mission to inspect it. The officers of our mission got remarkably few opportunities to inspect anything in Russia; rarely were they able to leave Moscow. As in their relations with the foreign press, on which I dwelt in an earlier chapter, the attitude of the Soviet authorities towards the Allied military missions left a good deal to be desired. There was great cordiality at parties but not nearly enough practical, day-to-day co-operation. The failure of the Russians in this war to make proper use of the friendly foreign newspapermen in their country or to give deserved facilities to the military missions of their closest allies will certainly take a great deal of explaining away, whether it be from the standpoint

of democratic solidarity, the furtherance of the Marxist ideal among states or even the obvious national interests of Russia herself.

This criticism cannot apply to individuals. General Rogov, for instance, was all compliance. He acknowledged how useful the American and British bombing of Bucharest and Ploesti had been. "Do it all you can!" he exclaimed. "Believe me, there's real chaos in Rumania—they don't know where to turn. The 3rd and 4th Rumanian armies were smashed at Stalingrad and on the Don, you remember, from which 7 or 8 divisions fell back into the Crimea. So far in Rumania itself we have met only Germans. About 50 per cent of the original Rumanian Army remains at home and most of that must be kept on the Hungarian border. Since General Malinovsky captured Dnepropetrovsk we've had to cope with only 3 or 4 Rumanian divisions on our front; against Koniev there were perhaps 4 or 5 and 9 or 10 lined up against Hungary—say, 28 divisions in all of 10,000 men each. We find the Rumanians apt to surrender even when their equipment is good, and at Stalingrad they had better winter equipment than the Germans. They just don't want to fight. The Rumanian officer is not the comic opera fellow he's generally depicted—I think he's better than in the last war—cultured, with good general knowledge. Still, I place him below the officers of the Finnish, Hungarian or even Italian armies.

"As to the German Army, its twilight, which began at Stalingrad, is now becoming a dark night. Before Stalingrad the Germans could teach us things. Now, nothing. I believe 90 per cent of their men know there's no hope of victory. Once each panzer division had about 200 tanks; now only 50 or 60 tanks and about 50 mobile guns, which of course aren't so mobile as tanks. Now they hold positions with the infantry in front, tanks and Ferdinands behind. Should the infantry run, the tanks and guns fire on them. This happened at Nikopol and Dnepropetrovsk. I was close enough to see it. The military thought of the Germans is no longer good. *We* are the innovators—they are stiff and text-booky."

On our way back to Moscow we flew for a while along the rim of the Black Sea and we could see light surface craft of the Black Sea Fleet steaming southward in line of battle. Admiral Felix Oktobriansky was operating all out against the Germans who were

trying to get away from Sebastopol. But he was obliged to use mainly his air arm, for the Black Sea Fleet itself was in a weak condition. You could not get any Russian to admit this, naturally enough. But when we went to naval headquarters in Odessa and met the area commander, Rear-Admiral Sergei Beloyusov, the fact emerged clearly from much which the admiral omitted to say. The greater part of the fleet's personnel appeared to have been operating on land—rather in the fashion of Marine Commandoes—for some time past.

The admiral was born in Voronesh forty years ago, wears three wound stripes won in action in this war; he formerly commanded the battleship *Marat* in the Baltic and sailed in her to England to attend the coronation of King George VI, at which time he must have been one of the youngest officers of his rank in any navy in the world. Stocky, with impassive swarthy features, he was carelessly dressed, looking more like a yachtsman than a naval man. His window overlooked the ruined port of Odessa, into which so far no craft had been able to penetrate; yet he said that naval bases now functioning further up the coast were enabling him to interfere heavily with the enemy's evacuation from the Crimea and to ensure that Sebastopol would become another Dunkirk. This claim proved to be abundantly justified, as I was shortly to see for myself. It was true that many thousands of the enemy succeeded in leaving the Crimea by sea, but this was earlier in the campaign.

The admiral looked like a man relieved of a crushing responsibility when he said, "Well, after all, the Black Sea never became a German lake, even though we were pressed back so far. This we owe chiefly to the fact that our fleet air arm never lost command of the air. Had that happened, we should have been finished, for of course we lost many ships and nearly all our bases."

He said he was using plenty of British and American equipment, especially aircraft.

"In the Black Sea we have warships of all categories." But he did not say how many of these were still afloat.

"The big battleships which were building in the yards at Nikolaev when war came were blown up when we left there; the Germans blew the remains still higher when *they* evacuated. They had not tried to salvage them. In Nikolaev the Germans did manage to build small craft and to assemble submarines. The Axis never had anything larger than destroyers in the Black Sea and these were Rumanian, with Germans on board in all cases

where the crew might be doubtful. That this was necessary was proved when we recaptured the Kinbugsky peninsula; at once ten supply ships manned by Germans, Rumanians, Czechs and even some Russians, sailed over the strait to surrender to us. Some of the officers came too—the rest,” added the admiral with a grim smile, “had to be *dealt with*.

“Our sailors have fought a great deal on land. Ratings under Rear-Admiral Sergei Gorshkov are fighting in the Crimea now and a battalion of sailors under Major Kotanov performed an epic feat in landing from the sea near Nikolaeyev and drawing off a whole German regiment with tanks and flame-throwers, so that our army could break through at another point. These sailors killed 700 of the enemy and held their own positions until the very last of them was wiped out. For this they were honoured by Stalin and a public funeral was accorded the whole battalion by the grateful populace when Nikolaeyev was freed.”

April 18th, 1944.—The battered looking man with the six decorations who is flying us back to Moscow is Novikov, one of the most famous pilots in Russia. We did not leave until the afternoon so we had to come down at Kharkov for the night. Novikov scorned to make the usual circuit of the airport but came in directly on to the runway, like a train entering a terminus.

I was in Kharkov 8 months ago, just after its liberation and it was far more shattered than Odessa. To-day you can see that reconstruction has scarcely begun. Nothing seems to have been rebuilt. The streets have been cleared, the water and electricity are running but great piles of rubble still stand in the ruined blocks. Were this an English town, and using English methods, one would guess that it would take five years to restore it. And this is only one of 80 Russian cities which have been ravaged to such an extent that they will largely require to be built anew.

Next morning we pressed on to Moscow on a tail wind. Just 5 hours and 40 minutes of elapsed flying-time brought us from the southern extremity of the Ukrainian front to Moscow, over a mileage greater than from London to Berlin. But when you remember that the Germans are still in Vitebsk, just 275 miles away from the Kremlin, you are apt to reorientate your ideas as to where the next big news may come from.

CHAPLIN AND SUVOROV

April 25, 1944.—With Finland wobbling on the brink of collapse, the Russians are beginning to talk more among themselves about the shape which the deflating Nazi balloon may be expected to assume as the wind goes out of it.

If the war, like the world of T. S. Eliot, is going to end not with a bang but a whimper; if the Fascist front is going down piecemeal, bastion by bastion, then the transition from war to peace in Europe is going to be more difficult than if the enemy cracks right across, as for example he did in 1918 when the Hindenburg Line was breached; and the situation will call for more sensitive diplomacy, perhaps, than anything the Allies have shown themselves capable of hitherto. In this connection the Soviet Union has some of her most able diplomats at home just now. In Moscow you may see Maisky and Litvinov not caught up in administrative routine in the Foreign Office but holding themselves free for advice and consultation. Troyanovsky, the former ambassador in Washington, is here too. I met him in Stanislavsky Street coming away from his work at the Soviet Information Bureau—the Russian version of our Ministry of Information. They say he is still a sage counsellor but I was shaken by his appearance, for I had known him in America. It was difficult to recognise in this grey-faced, shaky old man, suffering from the effects of a stroke, the pink and confident figure one used to meet strolling down Massachusetts Avenue.

The Soviet delegation to the Peace Conference will be as large as the British Empire delegations, representing as it will the Ukraine, White Russia, the Baltic republics, Armenia, Georgia and several other republics who are developing their own foreign offices, as well as the R.S.F.S.R.

May 1st, 1944.—For the first time since the war began, all Russia celebrates to-day and to-morrow two full days of heart-free holiday. Last May Day Moscow was still directly menaced by the enemy. To-day the danger has receded for good and the capital is garlanded from end to end with crimson flags and there is an

attempt—pathetic, sometimes, because of the small resources behind it—to put a little gaiety back into people's lives. Many factories are closed for two days. Key war plants which have to keep smoking are giving their workers two days off in rotation. All over the city the newly opened "Commercial Stores," selling wines, tobacco, fruit, chocolate, vegetables and groceries of all kinds off the ration, are besieged. During the coming week several stores selling unrationed clothing are opening and on May 15th, the city's biggest department store on the corner of Petrovka and Sverdlovsk Square, known before the revolution as Muir and Merrilees, is reopening with a complete range of goods from pianos and glassware to shoes, women's dresses and toys. About a score of off-the-ration restaurants are open so far and by May 15th there will be 45 in all. To-day you can dine and dance without coupons at the Moskva or Grand Hotels or at the Astoria in Gorki Street, which specialises in the kind of Russian gipsies who used to keep Bruce Lockhart awake all night in the old days. All this seems like intoxicating gaiety in war-time Moscow.

When I first came nearly a year ago the idea of getting anything, over and above the very stringent ration, seemed utterly Utopian and it is astonishing that in this year of constant advance at the front, sufficient consumer goods have been produced to make possible even the limited degree of purchasing freedom now available.

The new prices are extremely high. A plate of steak with vegetables costs nearly £2, a cream cake £1, an electric iron in one of the stores about £10, an aluminium kettle about the same. Most foreigners are horrified by the prices and the usual "Liberal" voices are raised in protest against the lack of democracy involved. "A queer kind of Socialism," they cry, "when the rich are encouraged to spend their money and the poor cannot even buy a pair of shoes." But I must say, I am unable to raise any moral indignation about the new shops. After all, they are not private shops: no private person makes any profit out of them. The whole policy is a very shrewd way of tempting war profiteers to disgorge and to combat inflation by funnelling the nation's savings back into government hands. After two years' rigid rationing, nearly every one has money to spend. Men who have been at the front all this time return to Moscow with thousands of roubles on them and nothing in the world to spend them on. Before the new policy, an officer on leave could hardly buy himself a drink,

much less take his wife out to dinner. The open market at which the peasants have been selling the produce of their individual land holdings for the past two years has brought great sums of money into their hands; that is why one hears of peasants donating 100,000 roubles for the purchase of planes or tanks.

The bulk of this money did the peasants no good for there was little or nothing they could spend it on. Now people are being encouraged to buy little luxuries at government stores so that the roubles will flow back where they came from. There are not enough consumer goods to share out evenly, on the ration, and the prices in these stores have been fixed deliberately above those on the free peasants' market so as to prevent re-sale. The Spartan simplicity of life will scarcely be affected by this relaxation: civilians will only buy in these shops as a special "treat," as for a birthday, while soldiers will be able to have some fun while on leave.

When I went to one of the free markets where gloriously plump peasant women were sitting behind their stalls selling eggs, pickled cabbage, potatoes and odd bits of clothing at astronomical prices I found the place much less crowded than it had been before. Market prices had fallen about 15 per cent because most people preferred to buy at the new stores where the produce was of higher quality, attractively packaged and, of course, in much greater variety. The market is jostled against the side wall of the Circus. The cries of the hucksters were occasionally muffled by the roaring of lions. Militia men circulated in the dense crowd to prevent the more gross forms of swindle. Technically, one is not supposed to auction things without a licence; this takes business away from the Commission Stores, where you can sell anything for a commission of 10 per cent, and verges upon speculation, which in Russia is a serious offence. But I did not see the police interfere with the old woman who was trying to sell one shoe (presumably to one of the war cripples who hobbled around with only one foot). I bought some onions for £2 a pound, at my rate of exchange.

The flood of purchasing-power pent up since rationing began is flowing into the new stores. One of the restaurants took 2 million roubles during the first few nights. The next step will be for the authorities to reduce the store prices a notch, forcing the market prices down a little further. If this process continues it will be possible, when consumer goods can again be produced in bulk, to envisage a supply of non-rationed goods at reasonable

prices. Everything on the ration card (and of course all house rentals) have not risen since the war began. So that if the "free" price level can be forced down by easy stages, as the supply of food and consumer goods slowly begins to increase, we might ultimately see a complete junction of rationed and non-rationed prices. That would be a triumph for Soviet economy as great as the Red Army's triumph in winning the war and with butter and sugar still costing £9 a pound on the open market, there is a long rough road ahead and it is hard to believe that complete parity could be reached. Still, the nearer they come to equating these price levels, the smoother will the country's recovery be after the war.

Meanwhile, every one is on holiday. To-night the maids in the Metropole are having a supper-dance. Huge portraits of national leaders are hung on all the buildings—a relic of the ancient cult of the Ikon, obviously. The enormous chops and lush moustaches of Comrade Kaganovich obscure half my window—transparent through the butter muslin which stretches over the wooden frame. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin tower 40 feet high, apparently in technicolour, upon the façade of the Bolshoi Theatre. Stalin is usually depicted in a marshal's red and gold. The Red Square lives up to its name with a lavish display of scarlet bunting.

Most striking thing of all, in this city which has not known paint for so long, is the quantity of paint which has been unearthed to re-decorate the shopfronts. All the same chocolate brown. The rickety trams which have trundled millions of miles since the Germans were at the gates, have been repainted brilliant blue or red. Poor old grey war-battered Moscow has really tried to give herself a lift and appear what she never was yet—attractive.

And as the Muscovites visit each other's homes to drink toasts and eat provisions painstakingly husbanded against the holiday, they have the satisfaction of knowing that no amount of paint can hide the yawning ruins in Berlin.

Russians love celebrating anniversaries of every kind. The annual Shakespeare Birthday celebration is now going on in Erevan, where *Hamlet*, *Othello* and the *Merry Wives* are being played in Armenian. The other night at the Moscow Arts Theatre the manager stepped before the curtain and asked the audience to stand in a minute's silence, in memory of that theatre's famed director, Nemirovich-Danchenko. We all stood. But when V.O.K.S., the society for cultural exchanges with foreign countries,

threw a party "in favour of Charlie Chaplin" (recalling the glorious invitation to a Marxist meeting once sent out by an Anglophile Muscovite: "Dear Friend; you are requested to an evening in favour of Charlie Marx") no commemorative strings were attached.

"We arranged this just because we admire Charlie so much," said the V.O.K.S. president, Madame Kislova, in welcoming Litvinov, Maisky and half theatrical and cinematic Moscow to the lavishly enmarbled Gay Nineties mansion which is the V.O.K.S. headquarters. None the less, there *was* a faint political aroma about the proceedings. After "The Gold Rush" had been screened we listened to speeches about Chaplin by Pudovkin, the cinema director, Ilya Ehrenbourg, Professor Mikhails of the Yiddish Art Theatre, the composer Shostakovich and others. The audience sat on gilt chairs in a white marble salon with a bust of Lenin at one end and an oversize photo of Charlie at the other. Some of the speeches had a rather post-mortem air, as of perorations at a French state funeral. Two speakers managed to drag in deprecating references to the absence of a Second Front and Mikhails feared that Charlie had suffered from Trotskyite defamation, because he had been too pro-Russian. Nobody mentioned Charlie's recent troubles in the courts, although most people knew of them. This is characteristic of Russians who, never seeing crime or divorce court proceedings in the newspapers, have developed an extraordinary imperviousness to scandal-mongering.

Dancing and supper followed the speeches, on the most handsome scale. Russians have not lost the art of entertaining, though they get so few opportunities to keep their hand in. Kislova told me a Chaplin film festival was about to open in Moscow. For the first time Russians will be able to see *The Great Dictator*, which came out at the time of the Russo-German pact and so was never shown, except, they say, in the Kremlin, where it convulsed the entire Politburo.

Kislova was born forty summers ago in Samarkand, and took the Golden Road from there to Moscow at the time of the revolution.

"Samarkand is not quite what James Elroy Flecker cracked it up to be," she admitted.

"Neither is Bagdad precisely like the *Thief of Bagdad*," I countered (for having seen the glorious film in Cairo one night and flown to the horrid city on the Tigris the next, I can no longer believe that Haroun al Raschid was a real person).

Pudovkin, who looks like a jovial Irishman and speaks very good English, told me he was leaving on the morrow for Baku to start a film on the old naval hero, Admiral Nakimov.

"I shall make a whole fleet of wooden ships on the Caspian," said Pudovkin.

Eistensein, meanwhile, is in Alma Ata, the Asiatic Russian Hollywood, making three full-length pictures out of the life of Ivan the Terrible. In spite of the war, the authorities seem able to divert a prodigious amount of effort into artistic ventures.

After this the evening became entirely carefree. A gargantuan buffet was revealed, and a bar serving all kinds of Russian wine. The film actresses, in their black velvet or satin ciré dresses and their sable capes moved towards it escorted by the male actors, nearly all of whom seemed to have some decoration or other, of which they wore the riband, in the prevailing fashion, above the top left-hand pocket. One lady drew my attention to Comrade Vishinsky, assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs and once the prosecutor who demolished the defendants in the great Trotskyite trials, observing, was he not the most handsome man in the room? He has, in truth, a mature if frosty charm. But he looked a trifle severe in his grey foreign office uniform and, perhaps happily, quite unaware of being the object of this girlish admiration.

One guest recounts that on the way hither in the Metro her neighbours protested to a peasant woman carrying a swaddled bundle that she would smother her baby if she kept her hand over its face. The hand was removed, whereupon a piercing shriek came out of the bundle, which was then seen to contain a pig.

"I am very sorrow, comrades," said the peasant, "I know animals are not allowed in the Metro, but I had to get my piglet home somehow."

Another guest sets out to cap this tale with one of a young man encountered in a tram. The conductress reproached him with dodging his fare, and called him a "hooligan," a favourite rebuke to rowdy Moscow youth, whereupon the lad, aged about 14, replied: "Lay off it, Tuyotinka (Auntie), I'm entitled to ride free." And he drew back the lapel of his coat, revealing the order of the Red Star, which he had won as a guerrilla, and which carries the privilege of free transport.

From some theatrical people I spoke with I gathered that there is a great shortage of new plays. As Alexei Tolstoi remarked to the

Englishman who referred slightly to the low level of literature in recent Soviet times: "We are winning glorious victories now: perhaps glorious literature will grow out of them—later on. That is the right order, I think. Beautiful books would not do us much good if the Nazis won."

Next day I sent a dispatch on the subject, which began: "At the risk of provoking the dispatch of a cargo of manuscripts instead of tanks in the next convoy to Russia, I must report that no fewer than four Moscow theatres are looking for English plays."

This was cut out by the censor who apparently thought there really was a risk of the mad English doing something so unpractical. . . .

The point was, it was English plays they wanted, not American. For want of contemporary plays depicting the life of modern Britain two of the finest theatres, the Moscow Arts and the Maly, had recently fallen back on revivals of *The School for Scandal* and *Pygmalion*, respectively. But it would be easier to say what is not wanted than what is. Plainly, drawing-room comedies by would-be Cowards or Maughams had best be omitted, with all that wide range of English dramaturgy which attempts to derive excruciating humour, or tragedy, out of the juxtaposition of those who speak King's English and inhabit the Top Drawer with those who can not, and don't. A working-class background isn't essential nor is any political content, although in these particulars Sean O'Casey is admired. But if any young playwright, having made up his mind just what the spirit of the England that looks to the future is, were able to distil that into a play, it would have immense interest here. And very likely make him 50,000 roubles into the bargain.

Why *plays*, in particular? The answer is that here the theatre is still more highly regarded than the cinema. Ordinary folk think the theatre more "cultural" and it receives more support from the state than does the cinema. In many new cities the theatre will be the finest building in the place whereas cinemas even in Moscow are small and anything approaching a "Super Cinema" has yet to be built. In telling Russia about ourselves, the cinema is certainly useful though "dubbing in" the Russian voices presents difficulties. But the theatre is more influential among those who inspire taste and form opinion in the nation.

Although we don't seem to be able to fill the theatrical bill, England is still powerful when it comes to the printed word. The

woman who is in charge of the central agency which distributes books to the libraries tells me that the most read foreign authors at the moment (all in Russian translations, of course) are Priestley, Galsworthy, A. J. Cronin and Dreiser. With higher brows the favourites are Richard Aldington, Ernest Hemingway and Erskine Caldwell. The young people's favourites are Mark Twain, Scott and Fielding. The most popular individual foreign books since the war are both English, Priestley's *Blackout in Grantley* and *Mr. Bunting*, by Walter Greenwood.

There are very few new Russian novels, on account of the shortage of paper. Short stories about the war by Semenov or Ehrenbourg are popular but most people fall back on the more plentiful classics, like Tolstoi and Dostoevsky.

This erudite intercourse with the female librarian is interrupted by a foreign office comrade who wants to know which is the strongest, whisky or vodka. Whisky, I tell him; one could not drink it neat as one drinks vodka. He asks me if I have been to the Cocktail Hall on Gorki Street, the only bar in Moscow that is open, where very potent mixtures with American names are served. I have indeed and have tried the notorious "Teran" (meaning "Ram," after the Soviet practice of ramming enemy aircraft), a concoction of Russian liqueurs and vodka. Two of these are sufficient to send the average citizen into a spin; the third is liable to bring one down out of control.

My most rewarding conversation of the evening was with a friend among the foreign diplomats who had just had a talk with Stalin—a feat so rare these days that it deserves, even at second hand, to be recorded. President Kalinin still manages to see some 50,000 people a year (many in large deputations) and he receives some 80,000 letters. But scarcely any foreigners except the British and American ambassadors have seen Stalin since the war began.

My friend had been anticipating a call from the Kremlin for some weeks, but since nothing had happened he had ceased at last to think about it and had spent the evening at the theatre when, on his return, he heard that "some Russian" had been trying to get him on the phone all evening. This proved to be Stalin's secretariat who soon called again to say: "If you can get here in half an hour, Comrade Stalin will see you." My friend had no car and he said he hardly thought he could reach there in the tram in time, but he was told a car would be sent. Shortly afterwards a large Packard arrived and took him into the Kremlin with a minimum of

formality. The precautions surrounding Stalin struck him as being considerably milder than would be thought necessary for most kings or presidents in time of war; between the front door and Stalin's study he encountered only six individuals in the long, winding corridors—all of them military men. In a waiting-room he was offered a cup of tea, after which he was shown into a large room which he recognised from the pictures as Stalin's conference chamber. There was a long table covered in green baize, with hard wooden chairs drawn up behind it. At one end a huge globe and on the wall an old-style lithograph of Karl Marx. Some of his diplomatic colleagues had told him this lithograph had been replaced by pictures of Alexander Nevsky and Suvorov which, like similar tales of ideological backsliding towards the values of Holy Russia, was demonstrably untrue.

The door at the far end opened and Stalin came in. He was not wearing uniform but one of his famous working suits—a pale grey, almost beige, coat, and trousers tucked into high-polished boots. The suit looked smart and well-cut. The colour matched his greying hair and moustache. Photographs had led my friend to expect a swarthy countenance but this, he found, was not so. Stalin's complexion was fresh and healthy, although his eyes had a tired look. His hands were strong and expressive in conversation. He raised his shoulders and gestured with his hands, as you would expect a Georgian to do. His voice was very small, his manner quiet and simple, almost shy. Molotov and several other people were present during the talk and my friend observed that their attitude towards Stalin was one of veneration. Stalin himself seemed not to notice this but they hung upon his every word. My friend knew how much Stalin had been undervalued abroad before this war—to many "liberals" he seemed a dull pedant, while Trotskyites assured us he was just a gangster—but he was not prepared for this degree of respect from eminent Russians. To them you could see that Stalin was not merely "Lenin to-day" but the living incarnation of an epoch in history—more precisely, several periods of history crammed into the compass of two five-year plans. He was Peter the Great and Karl Marx rolled into one. But Stalin did not play the great man and in conversation never sought the brilliant remark or the profound saying. His talk was immensely shrewd. My friend found it a treat to hear him express himself and develop an argument but there was nothing showy about his speech. He used homely, earthy phrases.

The discussion began with Stalin leaning back and saying, "Well, what is it you want?"

My friend, somewhat taken aback, stammered something about not wanting anything in particular but was there any way in which he could be of service? Stalin then asked a series of questions on my friend's particular subject. As my friend mentioned some aspects of foreign policy, Stalin said: "Excuse me a moment," and left the room. Through the doorway my friend could see him inspecting a huge map in the room next door. Then he came back nodding his head and settled down to a pipe. From a pile of cheap Russian cigarettes in front of him he removed the tobacco and stuffed it into his pipe. Stalin has innumerable pipes sent by admirers from all over the world, including some brought from London by the British ambassador. Most of them are of the underslung variety.

While he talked he doodled incessantly on a blank sheet of paper before him. The doodles weren't geometrical but an endless series of cells, each one developing out of the preceding one.

Whenever my friend touched on one of Stalin's personal achievements he would reply that there, as in other things, he was only following Lenin who, he said, not only told his followers what to do but had left them the most detailed instructions how to do it. So that his successors need only keep closely to his teaching and they would stay on the right path. My friend was immensely struck by the frequency of his references to Lenin, by the way he would quote a whole passage from Lenin to illustrate a point, as though he knew that entire shelf-full of forbidding volumes by heart. He was also struck by his broad, non-national view of events and the thought came to him: "This man built Socialism in one country but to assume from that, as many now do, that he is not a statesman with a world outlook and what is more, a world programme, is quite wrong." My friend also did not notice any of the "conservative tendencies" which Stalin is supposed to have acquired of late, sticking out of his conversation. Rather the reverse. He was, and is, a revolutionary, with a masterly understanding of world politics. But a Marxist understanding, of course. Being an elderly man now, he takes a long view. But a Marxist view. To hear some Western Socialists talk nowadays, you might suppose that Stalin had become a Grand Old Man of Tory tendencies. These people Talk Revolution in season and out of season: Stalin Acts in a revolutionary way, but only in season; and this

juncture of the war does not happen to be such a season. That is the origin of the misunderstanding between them. To base post-war relations with Russia upon the supposition that Stalin has become a Tory struck my friend as the height of absurdity.

"I felt his interests soar far beyond Russia or even Russia's victory and cover humanity as a whole," my friend concluded. "He is severely practical. He seems to hate theorising. But if you give him facts and figures he will listen to you indefinitely. It was long after midnight when I left him and on my way out they told me he was just beginning the busiest part of his day's work."

I wonder what Doctor Arnold of Rugby would say if he could come with me into the Suvorov Academy at Kalinin? *Mens sana in corpore sano*, the ideology upon which the good doctor laboured to make gentlemen out of the raw bourgeoisie produced by our industrial revolution, is in force here too, with a view to providing the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army with efficient, highly-educated officers. The doctor, no doubt, had some pretty tough little tykes to deal with in his time but I don't think any English public school master ever encountered such a nucleus as the knot of cherubic little boys who gathered around almost as soon as I entered the gates to tell me how they had fought at the front, killed Germans and won medals for gallantry.

The first one I met was Vassili Malinovsky, aged 14, who was playing chess in the school library during the morning break. On the wall over his head was a symbolic painting of General Suvorov leading a small boy by the hand up marble stairs towards a chamber where officers with standards were lined up to meet him—the caption beneath saying: "You, too, may become an officer—even a general."

When I asked Vassili how he came by the Partisan medal he wore he said: "The Germans killed my little brother, mother and sister so I joined the guerrillas."

"Have you killed any Germans?" I asked.

"You bet," said Vassili emphatically. And an officer with me confirmed that this was actually so.

"Two I killed with a grenade," the boy went on. "Three more with a tommy-gun."

Sergei Panasov, also 14, who had been a partisan in the Smolensk region together with Malinovsky, also wore a bravery medal on his school uniform of blue pants with broad red stripe, red

epaulettes, blue military cap with red band and red star in front. But he didn't claim any enemy kills.

Nikolai Mischenko said proudly, "I was two years in the army. I am now thirteen. Father was shell-shocked early on so couldn't join the partisans when the Germans occupied our area but as a doctor he helped the wounded guerrillas. When the enemy found this out they came and shot father. Later they shot mother, because she wouldn't say where the guerrillas were hiding.

"I got through the German lines," continued Nikolai, "and actually served with the Red Army. They used me as a scout because I knew the land behind the enemy. I got a medal for this. General Mischenko legally adopted me and I took his name. He thought I needed a bit of education and when the Suvorov schools opened, I got the chance to enter this one."

Lazar Bernstein, 13, a small blond Jewish kid with very intelligent eyes, wore the "For Valour" medal which he won as a guerrilla around Orel.

"The Germans came to our village in July, '41," he told me. "They shot half the population, including my dad and ma. We are Hebrews, you see. After they were dead, I ran away. I wanted to join the guerrillas. It took me a long time to find them, but I did and the guerrilla leader took me to live with him. I worked in a combat team with nine men. Once we derailed a troop train and I shot with my German revolver. I killed several Germans. I saw them fall. I used to pass through the villages without suspicion because I am small and perhaps I look dumb. The Army gave us a big job to do, to give the number of German reinforcements. I went to Dubrava village where the peasants had built huts of twigs after the Germans had burned down their houses. Through these twigs I observed the Germans driving through. I counted 300 Germans on motor-cycles and 15 trucks, then I went to tell the guerrillas. The Germans stopped me on the way; but I acted simple, and they let me go. Then we laid a big ambush and killed many of them."

When I asked Lazar how he came to enter the school he replied with a touch of dignity, "As I had been in the guerrillas a long time, I was officially entitled to a rest. A plane came from the mainland and took me to the army headquarters. They sent me to a children's home but I saw in the paper this school was opening and asked to get in. They took me. When I'm grown up I want to be a mining engineer."

A surprising thing was the number of boys who did not contemplate an army career. The headmaster, General Victor Vizhilin, who is just forty, told me the boys did not have to enter the army, although the school would be pleased if they did.

"Our essential object is to make cultured and literate citizens," he said, "and in accordance with inclination a boy can take up any career he likes after. We had 14,000 applications before opening in December, 1943. We could take only 510. Preference was given to the sons of soldiers and officers, also of civilian officials, killed by the enemy. Some of these boys saw their parents killed before their eyes. Many, as you see, were partisans themselves. Seventy-five per cent are war orphans. There are nine Suvorov schools, all in former occupied areas. A committee of the communist party, the ministry of education and medical officers select the children after a qualifying examination. The youngest are 8; they will graduate at 17. Our first graduating class will be 1947 and till then we can't take any more pupils. Food, clothing and tuition are free. So far we are using ordinary school books but at the end of the first year we shall have special Suvorov textbooks based on our first year's experience.

"There are seventeen women teachers as well as the men. The boys are divided into squads of twenty, each with an officer at its head. The officers are all men wounded in the war who have had previous experience as teachers. The boys are taught singing, dancing, riding and athletics as well as Russian language and literature, English or French, mathematics, biology, military history (especially the war of 1812 and the present war). We teach world geography before that of the U.S.S.R. itself. There is a course in world history. We have no corporal punishment, of course, but there are various punishments varying from the loss of the sweet course at dinner to the taking away of epaulettes, which is really a disgrace. Only one boy has proved too tough so far. We had to send him away. All nine schools are directly controlled by the Ministry of Defence. Our standards are higher than in similar grades of the state schools because, for one thing, instead of 3 months' holiday in summer the children don't get more than one month, with a few days in the winter. Those with parents can go home but the majority, who are orphans, go into summer camp with the officers, where they can go in for nature study and sports. All Soviet nationalities are here, including Tartars and Georgians."

Victor Gastelo, aged 12, son of a famous pilot who crashed his burning plane into a German petrol train, said, "I want to be a pilot like my dad." But of 16 boys I asked only 4 said they wanted to be officers, the rest opted for the arts, chemistry, engineering and so on. Leonid Kaplan, 13, whose father was killed at the front and whose mother managed a Moscow chemists' shop, said he wanted to be an officer but his replies were so diplomatic, I told him he should enter the foreign service instead. Asked what he knew of Japan, Leonid said, "Japan is an ally of Germany, which is an aggressor country. I want to visit England and America to see their armies and their factories—the technical side, you know."

Another diminutive, shock-headed lad, said solemnly, "My future is not clear. My destiny has not yet been decided."

Asked what a British Dominion was, another said, "It is a sister nation not yet capable of its own defence."

They were baffled when I tried to explain what an English public school was. "I understand that the parents pay," said one. "But what happens to a boy who passes the entrance examination but whose parents cannot afford to pay?"

There, I thought, you have hit the submerged rock of our English system, and I did not prolong the discussion, since I could hardly do so without being at a disadvantage.

The school itself is in a former ecclesiastical seminary which was used as a hospital by the Germans. It had the chilly antiseptic smell which all boarding schools seem to acquire, and I cannot say that it was an attractive place. But undoubtedly it was the best that could be done under conditions as they were, and it was very clean. I had the school lunch, which was better cooked than I recall getting at my own public school in England. The boys get four meals a day totalling 3600 calories, including 700 grammes of bread daily, 250 grammes of meat, 50 of butter, 50 of sugar, 45 of dried fruits, also American powdered eggs—outstandingly good fare for Russia at war.

The kids don't use the familiar pronoun but speak respectfully in the second person plural and they salute all officers and grown-ups. Bugles sounded the beginning and end of each class.

I wandered round the class-rooms freely. In one a pretty teacher was giving an English lesson by the phonetic method. Small boys with surprisingly hoarse, barrack-room voices were enumerating all they could see in a picture which she held before them:

"Aiee zee a Kaht; eet zeets on a Maht."

In the theatre, which has a reproduction of the Kremlin over its proscenium and Stalin's words in the crisis of 1941, in gold on a crimson ground, "Let the spirit of our great ancestors, Alexander Nevsky, Suvorov . . . inspire us." . . . A grey-haired woman pounds the piano while a young blonde in ballet slippers leaps into the air in time to a Polka and a shuffling circle of little boys tries to copy her—their army boots laid aside in favour of dancing pumps.

At the close of each class the teacher would say: "Good day, comrades," and the pupils replied in unison: "Good fortune to you, comrade teacher!"

Those who do decide on the army will enter it under the best conditions. They will pass straight into an officers' school where they will pass three years. If exceptionally brilliant, they may even go directly into one of the staff colleges.

The whole experiment was only five months old when I saw it. Unlettered village lads were there, with the children of intellectual parents. It was much too early to speak of results. It was, however, clear to me that this was not a fundamental change in Soviet education as a whole but rather an attempt to deal with two special needs together—the need of the future army for highly trained officers and the need of the devastated areas for special care to be given to orphans and other children who had suffered in the war. Less than 5000 children are involved in all Russia. Is this the nucleus of a new, specially-privileged group? It could be, of course. But if the majority of the boys persist in their declared intention of not entering the army at all but become musicians or journalists instead (as might be the normal reaction to a militarised education) we may hear a good deal less of the Suvorov schools ten years hence than now seems likely.

The Soviet Union is a great country for making experiments. And a great country for dropping them quietly later on, if they are found not to serve the general line.

I felt sorry for these bullet-headed little cadets, destined to live years on end in that dreary seminary, with no homes to go to; but when I saw the ruin that is the rest of Kalinin, even two years after the Germans left it, I felt that after all they were the town's best-off citizens. We had taken all night to do the short distance from Moscow because of the press of military trains going west, and at one o'clock the next morning, after a working day of 18 hours, we returned to our train to sleep, because there was no fit shelter in the town.

THE CRIMEA

IN THE MIDDLE of May we went to the Crimea. It was steely cold when we took off from Moscow airport before dawn and we flew through clouds and rain to Kharkov. The chimneys of the great tractor plant there poked up at us out of the clouds—the first sight of the ground for many miles. I was glad to see that they were smoking again. A stout Ukrainian breeze billowed over the field. The sun came out and we lay on the turf, seeking warmth while the plane was being refuelled, but failing to find it.

After passing over the smashed outline of the Dnieprostroy Dam, which had become a waterfall again, we approached the Crimea at a great height. You could see the narrow neck of land which attaches the peninsula on to the Ukraine and the lines of trenches facing each other across the water. It was difficult to imagine how any one could have broken into the Crimean bottle through such a slender neck.

A few minutes after this the Douglas circled over a scattered town which we were told was Simferopol and landed on a grassy airfield. As soon as its door was opened we realised we were in another world. Chill, boisterous Russia was behind us: this was the Mediterranean. The centre of the Crimea is a rolling steppe—but how unlike the Russian steppe! Great green fields with rippling tall grasses stretched between the villages; the cottages were surrounded with orchards and lines of cypresses stood guard along the roads. In the southern distance snow-capped mountains arose. Poppies, red, white and yellow carpeted the airfield, at the edge of which we saw a line of jeeps, a knot of Russian officers and then a long trestle table, spread as for a banquet in the open air and watched over by girls in embroidered aprons, their hair bound up in bright handkerchiefs. Perhaps, we thought, Stalin is about to arrive here, unbeknown. Or can it be this glamorous reception is all for us?

The girls advanced towards us, shyly drawing from behind their skirts bouquets of wild flowers, which they presented to all

the correspondents, men and women alike. Then they made us sit down among the sweet-smelling grasses while they helped us to boiled eggs in mayonnaise, sardines, caviare, cold sausages and chicken, washed down with an excellent red wine and then some Soviet champagne, served in soldiers' earthenware mugs.

The sun fell warm upon this idyllic scene. Limbs grown stiff in the long Moscow winter thawed out: champagne corks popped and distant aero engines maintained a cheerful roar. Teams of oxen ambled past with merrily tinkling bells. An emerald grasshopper leapt into my champagne and was drowned.

In four years of war corresponding I had never before approached a battlefield through layers of tangible charm.

Presently we got into the jeeps and drove in a dusty procession through Simferopol and down the long valley which leads towards the sea. It had been raining and the air was as fresh as England in April. The lilac and mimosa were out. We passed convoys whose drivers had run wild among the lilac bushes and had decorated their vehicles with blossoms. At the first stop our jeeps were garlanded in the same way. I don't suppose some of these soldiers had seen flowers growing like this since before the war. Some from the barren steppe country could never have seen such a sight in all their lives. For them it was like a first journey to the Riviera.

We cork-screwed down the mountains which overhang Aloushta and in the evening came to a rest-house near Massandra where we were to spend the night. It had been a holiday-home belonging to one of the big trade unions and reminded me of nothing so much as the expensive model village which Mr. Clough Williams-Ellis has built at Port Meirion in Wales. Little villas colour-washed pink and blue straggled up the hillside, surrounding a larger building with a balcony and a row of white pillars overlooking the sea; this was the dining-room and club-room. The Germans had taken all the furniture so that we had to sleep on straw-filled army cots. But they had not harmed the houses.

The hills rose up from the dark green sea more steep and spectacular than is the case on the Riviera: the coastline had a wilder, less tamed appearance; it was far greener and richer in plants. We walked through the garden in the dusk beneath the great walnut trees, the groves of oak and beech. Cypress and laurels fringed the paths, with pines and hazels near the sea. We wanted to swim but were warned that all the beaches were mined.

Beyond the main building vines stretched up the hill to where the forest-line began again. Pomegranates, mulberries and fig-trees were planted in neat rows. High above us—so high one had to crane the neck back to take it in—the mountain chain was capped in snow. A few miles of this glorious littoral, it seemed to me, must have been worth a hundred miles of the liberated harsh lands of the north to the troops who had reconquered it.

The usual over-liberal banquet was served to us that night by Red Army nurses. We should have liked to have pressed on to Sebastopol where the last German stragglers were then being rounded up, but our hosts never work in this hasty fashion. To them a trip to the front *must* be a beano, when foreigners are involved. The laws of hospitality, always peremptory in Russia, become more so the closer one approaches to the front line; the greater the obstacles to producing a meal of roast chicken and ice-cream, for instance, the greater will be the honour implied and the pleasure received, both by host and guest.

Next morning, our jeeps bedecked with fresh mimosa, we departed early, and in a steady rain, along the Corniche road to Sebastopol. This is a more dramatic Corniche than the one in France and, when traversed by Russian drivers in American jeeps, it becomes like some nightmare steeplechase sequence from a film. We went through Yalta, which the Germans had methodically burned, villa by villa, and past the former imperial palace of Livadia (where Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin were to have the second Three-Power Conference of the war). As we roared through the cork forest up the slopes of the Ai Petri, to which the road climbs nearly 4000 feet, the rain ceased and almost at once we were enveloped in a fine choking dust, of the consistency of face-powder. Our drivers gave us eye-masks and capes specially designed for dusty roads, but these were of little avail. In a few minutes we were caked as white as clowns. Reaching the mountain-top we were amazed to leave all the luxury of the Crimea behind and to find ourselves suddenly on a barren wind-swept plateau with patches of snow on the greyish grass. The sea was out of sight. Not a tree could be seen. All the flowers had gone: we were in winter once again.

A singularly unfortunate day lay ahead of us. We drove through Bakchi-Serai where once stood the palace of the Tartar Khans; where still stands the Fountain of Tears which inspired Pushkin's poem and the ballet in which Galina Ulanova is so

superb. Here the Polish Countess Marie Potocka is supposed to have wept away her life as the prisoner of the Khan. But all that remains is a dusty Tartar village, full of flies, scrofulous children, dead dogs and burned-out German troop-carriers. The aim of our conducting officer was to make a wide sweep and approach Sebastopol from the north. This entailed a drive of some 100 miles through places where the bridges had been blown. Usually the jeeps could ford the shallow rivers. But we were followed by a heavy "Chai Wagon" containing food and drink (again in vast, unnecessary quantities) for the whole party, and this could not cross the rivers and so was soon left behind. We went over a number of extremely dull defence lines north of Sebastopol which did not seem to have been fought for at all and found ourselves, in the late afternoon, stuck on the wrong side of the harbour and with no means of ferrying over into the city. Foodless, and without daring to touch the polluted waters in the streams, we drove back the whole length of the coast road without being able to show a light in all those 50 miles of hairpin turns, and reached our quarters at half-past ten at night, worn out and ready for bed, though we had not eaten since seven that morning. But this was not to be.

Just before midnight a sumptuous supper was arranged. At one o'clock in the morning we adjourned into what had been the ballroom of the holiday home for a concert by a Red Army band which lasted until 2.30 a.m. Iris and I were so caked in dust off the roads, imperfectly removed under a thin trickle of water in the yard, that we could hardly open our eyes. One correspondent was so exhausted that he fell asleep at the table and even when I put a cigarette between his lips and lit it for him, aided by the regular whiffle of his snores, he did not wake up. Nor did we escape without toasts—thirty of them, to be exact. Another correspondent got up and made the same speech three times. Our Russian officers, and a few more with extremely hearty constitutions, were able to find all this amusing. But the jollity merely made me bad-tempered. We were still nowhere near the battle. Not till the next day did we get to where we should have been several days before.

I am standing on Cape Chersonese, at the uttermost tip of the Crimea. Never before, even at Stalingrad, have so many Germans been slaughtered in so small a space as in this neck of land less

than a mile square where the 17th German Army met its death after the fall of Sebastopol itself. Here the remnants of the 200,000 men whom Hitler allowed to be bottled up in the Crimea, with their backs to the sea, whence succour never came, tried to fight in an area so small that it resembled the crowded pens of a cattle show and like cattle they perished in their thousands until, with one of their generals threatening suicide and two more killed the survivors, who could stand no more, threw down their arms, lay flat on their faces and pitifully waved white handkerchiefs as Russian tanks swept through, shooting at those trying to put out to sea on rafts and barrels.

Over 25,000 men were taken prisoner in this trap. God knows how many were killed. The dead are still heaped one on top of the other, although the Russian burial squads have been busy for two days.

The Chersonese peninsula has nothing in common with the soft littoral whence we had come. It is for all the world like Land's End. Green and gorse. The gentian and the camomile are in bloom, their perfume competing bravely with the dreadful stench of death.

The ground looks like grey Gruyère cheese, every yard pitted with shell craters. The lighthouse at the tip is a heap of rubble but the light itself has survived and sailors of the Black Sea Fleet are busy cleaning it up.

I walk among the human wreckage at the top of the cape. Scores of thousands of German banknotes are blowing about between the dead bodies. Many of them have been torn in two but some are still whole. A perfectly good 1000 mark note lay inside a discarded German helmet.

The Black Sea, black indeed under a leaden sky, laps against the beach and the bodies of Germans and of dead horses rise and fall together in its oily motion.

At my feet a young German appears still living. Rocking gently in the sea, he seems to be sadly shaking his head; his mouth opens as though to speak and his right hand makes a wide gesture . . . of despair? The current animates his whole body. Though the salt water is in his throat, the brine pickles him in apparent health. Up and down, back and forth, his watery gestures endlessly repeat themselves. Fascinated, I cannot drag myself away from him nor cease to wonder what it may be that he is trying to tell me.

Nearby are two live Germans, Siegfried Deutsch of Westphalia and Karl Deutschbein of Leipzig. Both privates in the early twenties. They are repairing their own 88 millimetre gun under a Russian guard. It is only slightly damaged. For two days these boys have been living there among their own dead. They are extremely cheerful and animated. Just to be alive must seem wonderful to them. They had been protecting the aerodrome on the very tip of the cape which the Germans used up to the last.

Fifty of their own aircraft lay wrecked about them. On the margin of the field two German generals were found killed—Major-General Reinhardt and Lieut.-General of S.S. Kurth. Here General Gruener, the suicidal one, was found wounded. In the cellar of the lighthouse General Boehme surrendered. These boys saw it all.

Deutsch says: "We had been promised ships would come and take us away. That was why we went on fighting. At 9 p.m. on May 11th, four ships did come close but we were told there was no room for us. Two were sunk. Two hours later the Russian guns were shelling the whole cape so hard we had to go underground, so we left our guns and went into the cellar of the lighthouse where General Boehme and seven staff officers were. Some of the officers told us to go out and fight the tanks but the general said no, it was hopeless. So we didn't go. Most of the other soldiers told their officers they were in no mood for more fighting. At last the Russian tanks came up and an officer knocked at the window and asked us politely to step outside. We handed him our arms and that was the end."

Deutschbein said he had home leave in December.

"Did you have a good leave?" I asked him conventionally.

"I had a good cellar," he replied. "The raids were something awful."

In the last 150 yards between the sea and the lighthouse 750 German bodies were lying. Broken rafts were drifting on the tide. On the beaches was a fantastic jumble of German junk—tin-hats, boots, Iron Crosses with clean new ribands, snapshots and letters by the thousand, one of which, from a Pen Pal in Berlin, said: "We know what you have to suffer but, believe me, we are suffering not less."

The Germans had only 50 tanks left when they fell back into the Chersonese. All of them are here. A few Sherman and American Honey tanks used by the Russians were knocked out nearby.

Every yard of the cape seems to have been covered by the fire of 100 guns from 100 millimetres upwards.

The chief of staff of the German 111th infantry division, Lieut.-Colonel Alexander Franz, made this deposition: "My division was almost completely wiped out in street fighting in Sebastopol and only 700 fell back into the peninsula. I couldn't restore order out of chaos. We had an earth wall line across the peninsula about 17 miles long, and we tried to hold this where we stood, no longer in divisions but just in groups. We were told to fight on for 24 hours and ships would then come to take us off. I told my men that the only way to save our lives was to fight, but that we would have to economise with the ammunition. The Russians broke through our earth wall" (I was not surprised: it looked the most flimsy structure) "and we then fell right back into the cape where we had a last line just over half a mile long and impossible to hold because the space behind it was too small. I speak a little Russian so I asked leave to go and parley with the enemy. General Gruener was despairing, on the verge of suicide, but still he rejected my proposal. In order to prevent the general's suicide, I ordered a man not to leave him an instant. Gruener ordered more trenches to be dug but the men refused and began running to the sea. The officers drew their revolvers and tried to make them fight, but they would not. It was chaos and demoralisation complete. I asked Colonel Flügard to surrender. He and the other officers around us agreed and I was asked to arrange the details. On my order, all our men downed their arms, and lay down on the ground holding white handkerchiefs. Then the Russian tanks came and it was all over."

The colonel volunteered in conclusion, without any one suggesting the idea to him—

"That last hour on the cape was frightful—immeasurably worse than Dunkirk. I was there, too."

But of course Chersonese was on a smaller scale. . . .

General Sergejev of the 4th Ukrainian Army took us thoroughly over the battlefield, from the brown plain of Balaclava with the green mountains behind it, to Sugar Loaf Hill, Sapoun Ridge, the English Cemetery dating from the Crimean war and fought over again these last few days, to Mackenzie Heights to the north. The main assault was made slap up the 400 feet height of Sapoun Ridge, which looks extraordinarily like Hellfire Pass in Libya. Here the troops of General Koshevoi came up against four German divisions.

Another German division and one Rumanian manned the northern defences.

When later I asked Colonel-General Sergei Beroyuzov, Tolbuchin's chief of staff, how in the world the Russians got up this forbidding hill against such opposition, he said, "Well, our artillery can break any defences: but if our infantry weren't ready to go through hell for their country, such things could not be done."

And I formed the impression that the Russian losses here had been extremely grave. Though, as usual, we saw no Russian bodies. They seem to bury them at once. With enemy corpses they are not in such a hurry. General Sergeyev kept saying, as we went towards the Chersonese, "Really, you should have been here two days earlier—it has been too much cleaned up now. Then the German bodies were really phenomenal!"

I was quite satisfied with Chersonese as I had found it. I could not get the aroma of dead German out of my nostrils all day, and even 24 hours after, when eating bread and cheese, a suspicion of the same sickening odour crept back.

Colonel-General Beroyuzov put the thing into this nutshell:

"At the start of the Crimea campaign on April 8th the enemy had just 200,000 men here—the German 17th Army consisting of the 50th, 73rd, 98th, 111th and 336th infantry divisions and about 30 separate battalions, including German marines plus the third Rumanian army group of 3 Alpine divisions, two infantry and two of cavalry. At the Perekop isthmus we put on a bogus offensive with 50 guns every half mile. When this was not pressed home, the Germans thought our effort had failed so when we did begin in earnest the enemy was surprised. Our break-through at Perekop made things dangerous for the enemy on the Kerch peninsula and he fell back too fast to be able to hold a line running through the centre of the Crimea at Simferopol. Our impetus carried us right through to Sebastopol which we hoped to take without respite, on the march, as it were. But we were held up by the defences you have seen, just short of the city. So we regrouped, put on another bogus offensive against Mackenzie Heights to the north which induced the enemy to take some of his guns off Sapoun Ridge. Our next feint was put in from the south, at Balaclava; the enemy drained more troops off there. Finally we cracked right against Sapoun Ridge in the centre and fought our way up it yard by yard. On May 8th we reached the top, took the English Cemetery

and got to the southern fringe of the city while at the same time our men to the north broke down to the harbour, which they crossed on all sorts of rafts—in barrels, even in some coffins the Germans had prepared—anything that would float. In all we took about 60,000 prisoners and I don't think more than 30,000 got away by sea, from the beginning."

Beroyuzov told us that the chief of the general staff, Marshal Vassilievsky, was in the Crimea, having helped General Tolbuchin and himself plan the whole thing from the start.

So this is what all the fighting was about! A city which had 100,000 inhabitants before the war but now has only 10,000; a grey city set on its many hills intersected by anchorages, a city which looks strangely like Plymouth, save that all of Sebastopol is like Plymouth's centre after the big German raids there.

There is nothing much to say about Sebastopol except that it does not exist any more. A place devastated so utterly as this necessarily makes a dull subject. Those who have seen Stalingrad tell me Sebastopol is as bad. Only an outline of the streets remains. Not a single house in the main portion of the city is habitable; the citizens who remain all live in the suburbs, in wooden shacks.

This morning 51 girls and one young man arrived as volunteers to reconstruct Sebastopol. Konsomols who had come all the way from Irkutsk in Siberia, their courage and faith would seem sublime were they not, at the same time, rather ludicrous. For 52 young people cannot make the slightest impression upon this place. Not reconstruction of the old, but the building of an entirely new city is what is needed. Sebastopol as some of our grandfathers knew it in the war with Russia is no more. A few walls stand. But most of the streets intersect just vast piles of rubble.

I climbed up to the top of Panorama Hill where the mayor, Vassili Efremov, once a sailor and the son of a sailor who defended Sebastopol in the siege of 1854, pointed out the desolation with a shaking hand and a moist eye.

"We shall have to start afresh, from the ground up, slowly putting one stone upon another," he said. The city had all been of limestone, one of the most solid-built in Russia, but not even steel buildings could have withstood what this place had been through since the autumn of 1941.

"When we evacuated in 1942 we left 50,000 people behind," said the mayor. "We had to save the soldiers to fight again and this town has a martial tradition so that the women didn't even ask to be saved. They were prepared to stay and stick it out as their forefathers had done in the Crimean War. The last few days before our army returned the Germans were evacuating the civilians by force. They put them on the top decks of their troopships as a cover so that when our planes flew over, they saw women waving to them. Below decks, of course, there were German troops. In 1939 we had 32 schools and 18 when we evacuated; now there's not one. There are plenty of things for the Atrocities Commission to look into. The worst German here was a Major Hamsch; we shall want him one day. All party members and Soviet officials who remained were killed, naturally, and so were all the people with Jewish passports. Most of the Jews were taken to Bakchi-Serai to be killed."

The mayor took me down to the harbour where soldiers were at work on a raft, getting the remaining petrol out of a German tanker that had been smouldering for four days. I went into the museum of the Crimean War but was advised not to stay, since there was a bomb in the basement. Nothing remained there except two 32-foot models of Russian wooden-wall battleships which had proved too massive for the Germans to smash up.

Rain fell steadily. The streets were silent and dead. No one could have any business in the centre of the town because not an office or a shop remained. There were no dogs or cats; no birds, not even in ruins that were thick with vegetation after two years.

All in all, Sebastopol was quite unproductive of newspaper stories. It was unproductive of even the memory of human life. And worse still, no monument remained here of all the heroism that had gone into the long siege—not even a graveyard with red stars upon it. The Germans had levelled that down. What really filled me with gloom was that this place—the scene of so much glory—was now just dull. It no longer bore the slightest resemblance to a town. Lacking the lustre of a ruin that has withstood the centuries, it was just a smudge on the map, a dirty place.

Driving away from there in the evening we passed lines of Germans. Marching deservedly away from the cypresses, the wild flowers and the purple sea, they were being herded north. In a field further on ten companies of prisoners were being guarded by

half a dozen Russian tommy-gunners as they sat on the grass, chewing at hunks of black bread. After dark our headlights picked up other columns marching into captivity, their officers at the head. We drove for five hours, repeatedly delayed by the fording of streams where bridges were down, and about 10 o'clock at night arrived in a Tartar village not far from Simferopol. This was General Tolbuchin's headquarters.

We were quartered in peasant cottages for the night. The Tartars with whom Alexander Werth and I found ourselves seemed a surly bunch and when we came to go next morning we found that one of them had stolen Alex's watch which confirmed him in the belief that the Tartars were a bunch of collaborators—a view amply substantiated later by the Soviet Government when it removed nearly all the Tartars from the Crimea into Kazakhstan and distributed their lands to war veterans. The Kazakh people, incidentally, protested vigorously against having these dubious people planted amongst them, but there is room and to spare for all sorts to make up the Kazakh world.

At General Tolbuchin's headquarters they indulged in the usual Russian practice of turning night into day. We were warned not to go to bed because presently supper would be provided. We lay on our bunks and dozed fitfully until one o'clock in the morning, when our old motorcade of jeeps returned and drove us for four miles in the pitch dark over fields and through woods to a cottage where we were served a supper of Borsch, Beef à la Stroganov and an excellent cake, washed down with the usual beverages and concluding with captured German brandy and cigars. This repast, attended by several generals, lasted until 2.30 a.m., at which time we were told that some German prisoners were awaiting our pleasure in the next room.

The first of these proved to be the commander of the 306th regiment of artillery, Colonel Hans Messinger, a man with rather Mongolian features, aged 47, who had been in the army since 1914. He wore absurdly small boots and his face bore an expression of pained surprise beneath the bloody bandage which encircled his brow. I asked him how he came by it and he said: "I was struck by a Russian soldier until an officer intervened. It's not serious—c'est la guerre."

He and the other officers we saw had all had their epaulettes torn off.

"I think we shall win the war yet," Colonel Messinger affirmed.

When he was reminded that even Hindenburg had thought otherwise at one stage, he said that stage had not come yet.

He said that Hitler's original order to hold the Crimea was carried out until the beginning of May when it became plain that the Russians were massing to attack Sebastopol. Another order came from Hitler to hold Sebastopol, but on May 9th they were told that after all Sebastopol was to be evacuated.

"I take the Fuehrer's orders seriously at all times," said the colonel with a crooked smile. "But I believe reinforcements could have been sent and I don't understand why such orders were given without them."

From beginning to end of the campaign, he said, 20 per cent of his regiment were killed or wounded; none got away.

Lieut.-Colonel Konrad Goettig, also a soldier since 1914, bespectacled, pedantic and with an air of repressed fright which was no doubt due to his belief that the Russians choose the middle of the night for shooting their prisoners, said he commanded the 289th infantry regiment and that his home was at Potsdam.

With a deprecatory smile he asked if it were true that England and America had massed an army of 15 millions for the invasion? There had been mistakes in leadership in the Crimean campaign, he admitted. What did he think of Hitler's leadership? "Until I was captured, I thought it pretty good." How had the Russians treated him? In the rear well, but at the front, he said, "Blood was up." He looked as though some Russian soldier had given him a clout or two, for good measure; but he bore no wounds.

Captain Robert Himmler, a perky Viennese of 47, began by volunteering: "I am no relation of Heinrich, no relation at all. He is not at all liked in Austria. I am a soldier since 1914, fought in Italy in the last war and have been in the Crimea since 1941. I like it fine. Our relations with the Germans? I can't say they were bad. I had no Austrians under me. German policy is to place Austrian officers in twos and threes all over the army, never with their own men. Certainly, my troops thought Germany would win the war."

Dawn was breaking as they led in Lieut.-Colonel Alexander Franz who was caught in the very last few yards of the Cape and made the deposition I quoted earlier. The poky cottage room was rancid with smoke and heat; one of the correspondents slept, his head on the table; someone switched off the electricity and delicate green light peeped in at the window, lighting up the

German's sweating face like a mask in a melodrama. But if Colonel Franz thought he was going to be shot, he was determined to put on a good Nazi show before the end. He may also have calculated that my description of him in a London paper, for example, would ultimately get back to Goebbel's office, and from there to Himmler, who would know how to deal with the family of a renegade. So in ringing tones he said:

"I agree completely with Hitler's main ideas, especially making Germany a great world power. I wanted a strong Germany and it was not for me to say by what means this should be achieved."

All these old-style German officers had not a word of apology to offer for Germany's rôle in this war. They did not seem to think a word of self-justification necessary. At five o'clock in the morning we all became suddenly tired of their machine-made answers and they were sent away. Then we got back into the jeeps and drove back to the cottages for three hours' sleep.

We had then been 22 hours without any sleep, having covered some 200 miles over wretched roads and I was glad to see that my wife was bearing up as well as any of the male correspondents, and actually better than some. She wore battle-dress and a side-cap and kept herself refreshed by occasional swigs from a whisky bottle containing boiled water, which she tucked between her legs on the floor of the jeep. I had a similar bottle, but I confess that mine contained vodka.

Before we went back to the Douglas which was waiting for us on Simferopol field, we paid a visit to Col.-General Beroyuzov and were received at his cottage in such a typically Russian way that, had one not known it to be perfectly genuine, one might almost have supposed it a burlesque. While he was discussing some matter with an air general inside, an A.D.C. came out and asked us to take a seat. The room was filled with flowers, stuck in all kinds of receptacles from American cans to German helmets. Presently a corporal sidled out with a balalaika and began to play. When he had finished another soldier appeared with a guitar, accompanying himself as he sang a very patriotic song about Stalin, the Party and the Army of the Working Class. He finished up by doing a few kick steps. All this in a nonchalant style, without the least self-consciousness. Waiting thus for an English general, they might have said: "Would you care to look at the paper?" or handed you *Punch*, six months old. Here they just detailed a soldier to sing a song, to while away a few minutes for the visitors.

When we got back to the Douglas there was the same reception committee that had greeted us on arrival. The girls in their gay kerchiefs, advancing coyly again, presented every one with a posy of wild flowers. Our last picture was of their bronzed smiling faces and the ribbons of their aprons fluttering in the slip-stream of the taxi-ing plane. Then the cypresses and the white mountains curved away beneath the wing. And out at sea a Rumanian ship burning, an oily smudge. . . .

THE YANKS (AND THE SECOND FRONT)
ARE HERE

I HAD LONG thought that, next to being on the beach-head itself, the best place for a war reporter to be on the first day of the Second Front would be Moscow. Nowhere would the long-awaited event be greeted with more passionate interest than in the place where they coined the phrase, "Second Front." Towards the end of May the sense of anticipation became tense. We all lived from day to day, fearing to leave Moscow lest the day dawn while we were absent. We had certainly rushed around the Crimea like Tartars on the rampage—too fast to do the "story" as it should have been done. Subconsciously, every one had an eye cocked over his shoulder on the narrow waters of the English Channel.

Russians felt it too. Shura and Katya, who always chattered like starlings as they dusted out my room with their twig brooms, chattered louder than ever these days. And when Shura went to the country on her day off, she rushed in earlier than usual to ask: "Has it come yet?"

The only men in all Russia who knew the date, probably, were Stalin and Marshal Vassilievsky.

The hundred-odd publicity officers in the Air Ministry at home, and the army's equally imposing though less vocal public relations staff could rest assured that though their work was reflected only indirectly in the Soviet papers nevertheless no military operation in history could have had so tremendous an advance "build-up" as the great design to which Eisenhower had set his hand. No doubt the effect of their nerve war upon the Germans had been excellent. One could only hope that those responsible had calculated with nicety its effect upon our allies, especially those under German occupation. Sometimes one could have wished that all our pre-invasion publicity could have been beamed exclusively upon Germany so as to avoid rousing excessive or ill-timed expectations among our friends, for whom after all the moment of our coming could be a matter of life and death. So far as Russia was concerned, the editors of the papers saw to it that nothing that might arouse

over-sanguine expectations found its way into print. But when great events impend, they seem to generate as it were out of a vacuum, their own warning current. And such a current ran through Moscow in the first days of June, as though it were a part of the first electrical storm of summer then flashing in our skies.

I went to an inter-allied concert sponsored by V.O.K.S. and found this atmosphere thick in the foyer—though there was nothing electric about the programme. English music was represented by Elgar's Cockaigne Overture and Christian Darnton's "Stalingrad" with a few folk songs—nothing by Delius, Walton, Lambert, Lord Berners or Gordon Jacob, Madame Kislova asked me what I thought of their choice. I asked in turn whether any one English had been consulted about what was to be played. Nobody, of course, had bothered to ask English advice. Some of the "intelligentsia" here, fearful of admitting ignorance on any point at all, are prone to rush in where a well-grounded Marxist angel *should* fear to tread. In this case the result was a programme as unrepresentative of English music as "Black Eyes" and "the Volga Boatmen" would be of Russian.

In the interval I was asked: "What theme song could Korneichuk, the Foreign Commissar of the Ukraine, sing to his wife, Wanda Wassilievskaya, the leader of the Polish Patriots in the U.S.S.R.?" The answer was: "I can give you *anything* but Lvov." Which restored my good humour for the rest of the concert.

During the night of June first a "Bolshoi Skandal" began to develop about the arrival of the first allied planes to land in the U.S.S.R. on a "shuttle" mission. The press department announced that they would take three or four American correspondents down to Poltava, where many of the bombers were due to land. Some eight other Americans were not invited and no British were included at all. The outraged correspondents, with the rare solidarity of their kind in times of emergency, began to pull together and organise a protest. The telephone of my next-door neighbour, Bill Lawrence of the *New York Times*, began to ring at 3 o'clock in the morning and kept ringing all night long. The American Ambassador was got out of bed. So was the general commanding the American military mission. Wires were pulled as often as they were rung. By daybreak a plan of campaign had been arranged. *All* the correspondents reasonably entitled to go on such an important story would turn up at the airport that morning

and "sit down" there until transport was arranged to the American base. Nearly twenty men armed with typewriters appeared at first light. We all got into the big Douglas aircraft and awaited developments. The Foreign Office man deputed to fly with us was a newcomer who had been in New York and spoke Brooklyn slang but was otherwise unequipped to deal with such a "mutiny." His mouth fell open at sight of this piratical gang who had climbed aboard his nice, empty aeroplane and he withdrew to telephone his superiors. An hour or two went by. Three Russian cinema men appeared to join the party and it was put to us that these fellows were essential and should be made way for. Finally, it was conceded that if three of us stepped off the plane, the rest should be permitted to go. Lots were drawn and I was among the three unlucky ones.

The Foreign Office man said: "These three will follow on later." But we had been caught that way before. And I am proud to say that all our colleagues then left the aeroplane, declaring that if a full, representative body could not go and no promise was given about the three castaways, then nobody would travel at all. More phone calls ensued. At last the promise was given. The plane took off.

In the evening we three who remained got into the plane carrying the American ambassador and his daughter and arrived in Poltava three hours later, as darkness was falling, but not too late to do our job. Had we not made such a fuss, this important story, important for all three allies, would not have been properly "covered" at all; not only were all the British papers left out but some important American ones as well. I don't think there was malice aforethought on the part of the Press Department. It was just another example of the complete incomprehension which that body has shown in many instances, throughout this war, as to the proper means of securing publicity for the Russian war effort in the world abroad. The fact that this was primarily an American story only made the neglect of the American correspondents more foolish; but we had encountered the same failure before in matters of purely Russian interest and advantage.

Major-General John Deane told us that the Poltava base was one of the fruits of the Teheran Conference on which his military mission had been working with the Russians for many months. He emphasised that it was a three-sided operation, not just an American performance.

"We owe much to the Russians," he said, "and to the English too, without whose aid we could not get off the ground at the other end, whether in England or Italy. A great deal of equipment was brought in on the northern convoys and that entailed the Russians sacrificing some priorities for us. They unloaded our gear before unloading their own, got the trains away fast and sent trainload after trainload right across their own lines of communication for hundreds of miles. Other gear came in from the Persian Gulf and was moved across the Caspian Sea or by truck. American ground staff came in from the Middle East across the deserts of Syria and Iraq. But only the key men are American. The Russians gave us their best mechanics who formed teams with the American mechanics. The Russians gave every one a blanket visa, crews and ground staff alike, and you can imagine what a job it was to bring in so many foreign soldiers with the language difficulty and so on. We brought our own rations but rely also upon Russian food. Our men are paid in roubles. We shall have a post exchange in the camp and everything will be priced in roubles—a complicated thing to work out. All the ground defence is Russian."

General Deane added that the first photographic mission had been flown into Russia some weeks earlier by Colonel Paul Cullen, whose flight was actually the first "shuttle" into Russia. He flew a Lightning. Colonel Elliott Roosevelt, the President's son, had flown to Moscow earlier to help make the arrangements.

We slept that night in some *wagons-lit* on an old railway siding. A rash of American tents, in neat rows, had sprung up around the airfield which had been badly smashed up before the Germans left. An American hospital had been set up, staffed by nurses who looked like walking advertisements from the *Saturday Evening Post* in their fresh summer uniforms. They had seen nothing in Russia except this airfield, on which they landed some weeks before. Some had the rather pathetic idea of going to Moscow to "do some shopping" and others wanted to see the ballet. The mess was in a big bell tent. The food was strictly American—with first-rate coffee and canned vegetables. On Sundays there was creamed chicken and apple pie, with cheese.

Each night there was a film in the open air, alternately American and Russian. The Americans danced with the Russian girl mechanics and clerks in their short skirts and high boots and there was an enormous consumption of American cigarettes.

Next morning we were told that 700 bombers of the 15th Air Force in Italy had set out to bomb six towns in Rumania and Hungary, five of which targets were suggested by the Russians—Cluj, Oradea and Simeria in Rumania and Zolnok, Debrecen and Miskolcz in Hungary, all lying along the main rail routes supplying the southern front against Russia. Some 6500 rail cars and 150 locomotives were in the target area at that time—900 cars at Debrecen. Including the short-range fighters which returned to Italy and the long-range Mustangs which flew the whole course and landed at another field in the Ukraine, over 1000 planes took part in the operation.

At 1.15 p.m. a distant rumbling was heard over the sunny rolling countryside and soon the first formations came into sight. It was almost an hour and a half before they had all got down. To unscramble the scores of giant planes, circling the field at different levels and in different groups, seemed from the ground an extraordinarily complex task. As they came in one by one we looked for signs of damage. But none of them had been hit.

The first man on to the ground was General Ira C. Eaker, commanding the allied air forces in the Mediterranean. With a Churchillian air, he lit up a cigar and hastily pinned a couple of decorations on to the two Russian generals who had helped prepare the base.

The first crews told me they had no flak at all except when passing over the German lines, after which they flew very low, sometimes at 200 feet. Peasants came running out of the cottages as the huge formations thundered over the fields and orchards and many of the crews said they saw Russians smiling and waving up at them. Though they may not have recognised the American star, they knew at least that they were not Germans.

The feelings of the German infantrymen in their trenches on seeing the great armada passing overhead, flying as it were the wrong way, were summed up by one California flier who said, "It must have put the fear of Himmler into the buzzards."

General Eaker, at the briefing before they left Italy, told them: "The Russians pay off on results, and by God I want results. While you're in Russia I want discipline and courtesy, too."

Lieut. Herschell Green, then the leading ace in the Mediterranean with 13 kills, flew one of the Mustangs and another pilot was an American Indian, Lieutenant Hiawatha Mohawk. I flew over to the neighbouring fighter base in the afternoon and met

them both. In charge of liaison there was Lieut. John Fischer, son of Louis Fischer, who had been an American correspondent in Moscow many years. He told me how grand it was to see Russians and Americans getting together on the basis of fighting together—the first time this had happened in this war. He saw some Russian soldiers take the spades out of the hands of an American construction squad and insist on completing the digging job themselves. Quite a number of the Americans were of Russian or Polish extraction. One lieutenant said, “My grandma is in Kiev and I’ve got aunts and uncles all the way from Smolensk to Bessarabia.”

We English, with our “Anglo-Saxon” illusions about the United States, are apt to forget that vast tide of immigration in the eighties and nineties which brought so much Slav and Eastern European blood into America.

When the Germans left Poltava, only a few months before, the field was not fit for “heavies”; thousands of tons of metal matting had to be imported to solidify the extended runways. When they smashed up the existing field and buildings, the Germans can never in their wildest moments have supposed that American bombers would be landing there so soon after.

Soon after they had shaken down, the crews were off in their own transport, exploring the countryside. The roads were filled with trucks bearing the White star. Every man seemed to want a “souvenir.” I traded in some German money I had picked up on the Eastern front for Allied occupation currency from Italy. It was instructive to hear the comments of the young fliers when we went to Poltava.

“Gosh,” they kept saying in simple-hearted wonder, “is it really *all* like this?”

“We’ve seen some bombed towns in Italy, but never anything like this.”

We went out to the battlefield of Poltava where Peter the Great defeated the Swedes in 1709. A bunch of ragged little children who were playing soldiers, head high amidst the rolling grain, ran after the Americans in excitement. They were disappointed when, instead of indulging in any martial exploit, we fell to picking cornflowers and to speculating upon how many generations would have to pass before a memorial to German dead would be possible in Russia, like the granite pillar which the Swedes had erected here, inscribed in their own language, to the soldiers of Charles XII.

We drove through a fine avenue of chestnuts and stopped outside

a Palladian mansion, ghost-white in its ruined park, with only its walls standing. Every statue in the garden had its nose chopped off.

"Do the Germans always deface statues?" asked one youngster.

"Pal, they destroy whole countries," replied his older companion.

Many times I heard them say, "If only the folks back home could see this," as we passed through streets burned by the Germans in their retreat. One modest fellow told me, "This is my very first mission. Really, my first glimpse of war. I sure am horrified at the way they've torn this country apart."

He had never actually seen the results of bombing and had never, of course, heard a bomb come down. From his eyrie over 25,000 feet the whole process must have seemed quite academic. I was amazed to find how little some of the crews knew of what they were actually doing. Some of the gunners, for instance, did not even know the names of the towns they were bombing. One man said: "It's all pretty impersonal. Personally, I never see a thing. We just keep our formation tight and if anything comes within 200 yards, I shoot it down—whether it's one of ours or one of theirs. That's the rule, if a fighter comes in close, we put him down. Things move too fast. You can't take a second chance."

Security on this flight was so intense that some of the planes which went along on secondary operations didn't know where the bombers were going and kept following them, after they should have turned back—mystified as to why they sailed on, apparently out of range, into enemy territory.

Russian officers told me they were impressed by the lavish American equipment and the good educational background of all ranks.

"They all seem to be cultured fellows," said a colonel.

And they were amazed at the frivolous pictures painted on the bombers—mostly of "Pin Up" girls, and by the messages scribbled on American bombs by the workers who made them. "Greetings to Tojo from Wheeling, West Virginia," was on one bomb, sent to the wrong address. Another read, "Senior class of Burlington, Vermont, High School each bought £77 worth of Bonds."

The Americans were impressed by the speed with which the Russians dug emplacements, erected buildings and moved the huge quantities of food and oil required. Each day a supply train steamed into the field on a spur line.

I heard some pretty wild talk among American staff officers when someone asked whether so great an effort was really worth while, from the viewpoint of the Russians, who had managed well hitherto without any direct strategic bombing on a big scale. This one base did not much matter, someone hinted, it was the "principle of the thing." America had an air base in the Ukraine: this might be the beginning of bigger things; if in the Ukraine, why not elsewhere in Russia. Why not in the East, against Japan?

Wild talk, because I believe the Russians, far from granting the base as the thin edge of a wedge in the East, only overcame their reluctance to divert so much effort and petroleum to this business as a gesture of friendship. And as things turned out, the base was definitely not a success either from the American or the Russian point of view. Soon the front moved far to the west, leaving its expensive installations too far behind; very few missions were flown out of it before a German raid which destroyed some 40 Flying Forts on the ground.

I think it is fair to say that the Poltava base was not worth the military effort that went into it. There remained the moral benefits, and they were great. A great many people who had all too vague an idea of what the Allies were doing in the war, saw the great planes going back and forth and met the Americans who operated them. The comradeship between Russians and Americans, meeting for the first time in Russia without inhibitions, was a wonder to see. I think it made all the Englishmen who saw it envious. We would have liked our own planes to have come in there, even if the military result had been negligible, just for the good results that sprang from this fraternity.

Indeed the good relations that grew from the daily contact between Russians and Americans made me wonder how our own men would get on should the time come when they would enjoy a similar opportunity. We in England find so much to admire in Russia just now that we must of necessity wonder how an association that must often seem to us one-sided will endure through the twenty years of Anglo-Soviet co-operation for which the Treaty provides. We feel we have much to learn from Russia. Has Russia anything to learn from us? I think an average Russian would agree that the answer is "Yes."

It would be easy to make a list of the things which the Russians have not admired in England in the past—our years of unemployment, of failure to develop our own territories while we were

frivolling away our substance in developing other people's; our "economics of scarcity" under which millions could not buy what other millions produced in super-abundance. . . .

In economic organisation, the Russians don't consider that we can teach them anything; but that does not mean they are not prepared to learn from us, and from others, in special spheres. Russia surpassed all countries between the wars in growth of industry, but she still lags in volume of output per head of the population and she cannot expect to have consumer goods in sufficiency until she makes good this debit. During the five year plans she learned more from America than any one else. Nearly every modern factory is organised on American lines. But there are certain things we British do particularly well and the Russians acknowledge it. Chiefly, I think, they admire the high proportion of technical skills among our population. If Russia's 190 millions had proportionately as many industrial technicians as our small islands possess her problems would be much nearer solution. British war industry obtained so high a rate of production out of small manpower because each individual was capable of high performance. To produce more per head is the goal of the entire Russian people. England has her Stakhanovites, too, and if we don't honour them it does not mean that their performance is not noted elsewhere. The Russians admire our development of light industry with electric power, our first-class war aviation, our leadership in television and inexpensive radio, our railway electrification, our ship-building, our house-building and furniture craftsmanship, the great technical efficiency of the Royal Navy. When one says "the Russians admire these things" one does not mean they are known and appreciated in Buriat-Mongolia or Turkestan. One does mean that the wide-awake citizen who reads the foreign page in his newspaper does appreciate the special skills of the modern Englishman.

I remember Karo Alabian, the architect chiefly concerned in replanning Moscow, telling me that English town-planning possessed lessons not only for Russia but the world.

"Your laying-out of garden cities produces a comfort and cosiness which we should like to have," he said. "Your love of nature is reflected in your small towns. Your plans compare favourably with the American, which are too geometrical. Your layouts are more picturesque and blend into the countryside. If a fine tree stands in the way, you plan around the tree—you don't chop it

down. We need something of that spirit in our small towns and suburbs here."

The Americans rank first in industry but in cultural activities (a phrase which does not sound so dreadful in Russian as it does in English) the Russians want to learn the best we have to give. And I think we have things to give which America has not yet achieved. From Shakespeare which nearly every schoolboy reads in a modern Russian that transforms him from a dead poet into a live playwright, the Russian draws from the store of English feeling. That is why, although the Russian knows few details of our life, he is well aware in what the English spirit consists. Pickwick and Copperfield are real people to the Russian student and Byron even dominates Pushkin, his emulator. It will be a long time, even if we are going to have British legations in Kiev and Tashkent and Samarkand, before we absorb as much of Russia's living spirit as the Russians already know of our classic literature.

In every sport from horse racing to golf we have much to teach the Russian because of our amateur approach to games, which accords with his own.

I am convinced that the purely commercial approach is wrong. We should not think merely of how many gent.'s suitings or tennis rackets we might sell to Russia one day but rather of the elements in our way of life, cultural and practical, that are likely to be of interest to Russia and useful in her development. Trade no longer follows the flag. As America has shown, it follows the cinema, it follows the idea. And for the moment our convoys have room only for war materials, and ideas. The Russians want good films, books and plays and some art forms of ours which fill a gap in theirs—light opera, for example.

"Would that Gilbert and Sullivan were ours!" I once heard a Russian musician exclaim.

Russia and America are two continental powers whose economies seem destined to grow more alike, ultimately perhaps to cancel each other out. But our economy will always be different; it will be elastic and adaptable and more complimentary to Russia's than that of the U.S.A. The non-military items which we have been sending to Russia by convoy indicate her immediate post-war interests too; they are machine tools, electrical plant, turbines, generators, radio equipment, telephones and wire, railway locomotives and equipment for railway electrification. We don't

unfortunately produce a typewriter which the Russians consider first-class nor an all-purpose transport aircraft like the Douglas (now standard all over Russia) nor even a first-class semi-luxury car like the Packard, which I believe the Russians will produce after the war under licence. However, the character of Russia's post-war requirements is bound to be affected by the nature of the peace. If it is a good peace, permitting a big cut in military budgets, there is likely to be a much freer exchange of goods with the West, and in time even of goods which now seem superfluous to Russians, than was possible at any time since the menace of Fascism first forced Russia to turn herself into a warrior state with an economy designed to withstand siege, not to afford the sweets of life to her people.

We stayed at the air base five days. On the last day, after rising at 5 o'clock to see the bombers set off on a mission to bomb Galatz in Rumania, we were hanging about the radio tent with blank minds when the news came over that the Allies had landed in Normandy.

At once every one started making bets on when the war would be over. I soon had £20 invested in the proposition that the war would *not* be over by Christmas Day. Fortunately fate had not carried us too far away from Moscow and in the late afternoon, after the bombers had returned, again without loss, we took off for Moscow. We flew at over 10,000 feet against a headwind and landed by 9 o'clock, in time to feel the tempo of the great day as it rose on people leaving their work in the evening. I met the author, Boris Voytechov, author of *The Last Days of Sebastopol*, who was in a great state of excitement and, seizing my Red Ensign which the sailors on the convoy had given me, we made off in the direction of the Hotel Moskva, where British and Russian officers had arranged a get-together to drink some toasts to victory in Russian style.

The entire Allied colony seemed to be in the restaurant, which looks like nothing so much as the refined purlieu of Messrs. Dickens and Jones. We found that by 4 p.m. the whole country had learned the news, which was first released on Moscow radio at 1.45 p.m. My secretary told me that a perfect stranger, on overhearing her say that she worked for an Englishman, flung his arms around her and embraced her in the lounge of the hotel. The telephone system had been swamped as people rang up their friends

all day long to exchange congratulations. One old lady we knew who had been keeping a bottle of white wine for 2 years against the day of the Second Front asked all her friends in, and each had a sip. English and Americans who were identified in trams or Metro had their hands shaken—a very rare occurrence among the phlegmatic Moscow crowds.

The streets, which were washed pale blue by the moon, were crowded with people up to curfew time. There were no especial celebrations but the air was vibrant with hope and gaiety, so long suppressed in expectation of this day. Not since the victory at Orel nearly a year before had I seen so many smiling Russian faces. On them you could read gratitude to faithful allies and gladness that the pledged word was being carried out. For well-nigh 200 million people June 6th, 1944, was a day that will never be forgotten.

Next morning the entire back pages of the 4-page papers were filled with dispatches from London and the inside pages had explanatory articles by the military commentators with photos of Eisenhower and of British troops debarking from the landing craft. Churchill's speech was there in full, and every other official announcement. But not the King's speech. The fact that nothing appeared on the front page was not surprising because the Soviet papers never carry foreign news there. Announcements like "Meeting of the Stalino Communist Party" were on page one in type much smaller than the news on the last page.

Major-General Mikhail Galaktionov praised the courage of the Allied troops, and stressing the difficulties of the task, wrote: "These operations have no parallel in the history of war for the Hitlerites hold almost the entire seaboard of a continent. The landing had to be extraordinarily quick and vast in scope, which explained why its preparation took so long."

On the whole the papers provided some counter-checks to the natural ebullience of the Russian people who, having been told so long that victory was impossible without "the Blow in the West" as all the papers term it, now had a tendency perhaps to underestimate the formidable struggle ahead. *Red Star* hinted at an imminent Soviet offensive, declaring: "Germany now stands in danger of smashing blows from the east as well as the west."

Ilya Ehrenbourg wrote: "The heroes of Stalingrad and the Dnieper are proud of their allies. The seasoned soldiers of Russia with all their soul greet their comrades in arms, the weavers of Manchester, the students of Oxford, the metal workers of Detroit,

the clerks from New York, the farmers of Manitoba and the trappers of Canada, come from afar to put an end to the Nazi tyranny."

And Demian Bedny, the veteran Bolshevik poet now over 70, contributed to *Red Star* a few verses of which I present my diffident translation:

"Scarce has Rome fall'n, a glorious milestone,
When on the verge of France we see
Brave men cut a wide swathe of combat,
Nor fear the barrier of the Sea.
So let us quote the Ancients' valedictory :—
' Forward, good friends; God grant you victory! '"

II

BREAKING THE MANNERHEIM LINE

ON THE MORNING of June 10th, 1944, Leningrad awoke to hear, 15 miles away, the same formidable music as had heralded the launching of Govarov's offensive which had broken the siege almost five months before. The guns of General Govarov were speaking again, this time up on the Karelian Isthmus against the enemy whom *Pravda* now referred to as the "Mannerheimites." The first Finnish defence line was broken through almost at once and two days after the initial barrage Govarov's army was in full cry after the retreating Finns. By June 13th the Finnish Army had cracked wide open and two days later I went up to Leningrad to see something of the break-through.

This time we travelled in comfort in the "Red Arrow" train. We got out at Kalinin and had the cheapest meal in the railway buffet which I ever had in Russia—and without coupons, moreover. We paid just 5 roubles for a huge bowl of soup, black bread, a dish of American powdered-eggs and tea. The train had a couple of ack-ack wagons attached behind, just in case any enemy planes appeared from north of Lake Ladoga, where the area around Petrozavodsk was still occupied. The gunners seemed to have their wives with them—also in uniform—and led quite a domestic life in one end of the box car while the weapons projected through the roof at the other.

When we got to Leningrad the rumbling of the guns was receding. But you still heard them across the water when you went down to the River Neva during the still "white night" and listened on the promenade outside the Winter Palace. Leningrad was almost normal again. Instead of the empty streets we had seen in February, two million people were now in the city. Going to the front from there was just like going up to the Alamein front from Alexandria; the distance was the same and the contrast between a great peaceful city and the dust and wildness of the battlefield just as marked.

During the months between the two offensives from Leningrad the Russians considered they had been tender almost to excess with

the Finns, who relied to the last on propaganda from the legation in Washington to extricate them from their difficulties with the old line about "dear little Finland, the debt-paying Democracy." But this fell on deaf ears. The Russians received a peace delegation in Moscow and offered them substantially the same terms as the Finns were finally to accept after their army had been broken, but the Finns declined these terms, trusting once more to the promises of Ribbentrop that more Nazi troops would be sent.

This Russian break-through, like so many others, was an artillery job. In spite of the luminous nights, the Russians managed in the weeks before the offensive to dig tunnels underground up to within 100 yards of the Finnish front-line, from which the infantry emerged at zero hour, without being spotted as it assembled. Heavy guns—what the Russians call "Destruction Artillery"—were brought up closer than ever before. One monster gun commanded by a Lieutenant Kaliniev was actually hauled to within 1400 yards of the enemy line from which it fired 140 shells over open sights at the largest pillbox on that sector, which was built of concrete, armour, rubber and then soil to a total thickness of 18 feet. Direct hits were scored by 136 shells, causing the roof of the pillbox to collapse and its sides to split open. The result of this and similar feats of close artillery work was the disintegration of the Finnish lines: one Guards unit, for instance, within half an hour broke through to the fourth Finnish line of trenches. It was pure slaughter. Deafened and demoralised by the huge bombardment, the Finns offered no resistance at many points but down on the Gulf of Finland they fought desperately until the troops of Lieut-General Alfierov worked around the landward flank, threatening to pin several thousand Finns back against the sea. Whereupon they abandoned the whole right flank of their line and retreated.

I rode out of Leningrad in a jeep with a major from General Govarov's staff who like many other officers on this front had fought the Finns before, in 1940. He did not think the Finns were fighting so well now as then. There were a few German officers with them in the south but the Mannerheim Line on the whole was manned by Finns right through. Their air situation was very weak and they had no tanks of their own. They were using a few captured Russian tanks and some old German ones. The major spoke of how for years the Western world had been "drenched in Finnish propaganda" which asserted that Finland was a small,

honest state like Switzerland. The Finns, he said, were clever propagandists, having paid another instalment on their debt to America only a few days before Govarov's guns spoke, in the hope that this would influence the Americans to help them. The major seemed agreeably surprised to see that the Americans had not fallen for this line once again, but he could not understand how it had been possible for the Americans to avoid declaring war on Finland. I asked him why the U.S.S.R. had not declared war on *our* enemy, Bulgaria, and he replied, "Tactics."

You could not move up the Karelian Isthmus without being overwhelmed by the terrible fate which the Finns had brought upon themselves. Although Finland was obviously beaten, the individual Finn was going on fighting for his lost cause. There were very few prisoners. "It's a war of extermination," the major said. "The Finns won't give themselves up."

In the villages not a single Finn remained. The only Finns I saw were dead ones, lying in the ruins of their fortifications. We passed thousands of American trucks carrying up troops and supplies and the few prisoners taken declared themselves amazed at the extent of American aid to Russia when their government had told them the United States was still only lukewarm in support of her ally. Indeed, it is a strange sort of "non-intervention" the Americans are practising towards Finland. Still at peace with them, they have furnished the Russians with a good share of the equipment with which Govarov is now smashing up the Finnish army.

The Russians ruled the air serene. During the first day I saw not a single enemy plane. But within five minutes I saw 80 Russian bombers and fighters droning very high towards Viborg. Stormoviks were roaring up and down the isthmus all day long.

The Finnish fortifications had been beautifully constructed. But their artillery was quite inadequate. Given enough artillery, the Mannerheim Line might really have been impregnable, but the Finns sought to make up in the strength of wood and concrete for the weakness of their fire power. They had about 400 tanks in all, mostly midgets. I saw numbers of 76-millimetre Lavetti guns, built in 1938, following the Russian 1902 model, and these were useful only against infantry at ranges around half a mile. Inside some of their most elaborate concrete forts they had only machine-guns. It looked as though they had never hoped for anything better, for the embrasure slits were too small for field-pieces.

The Russians were astonished at the complexity of the Finn forts. I went over one near the sea, overlooking the fortress of Kronstadt, which was a whole hill, hollowed out inside like a beehive. But they could not figure how the Finns, without the necessary guns, could have hoped to hold out in these white elephants; and that being the case, why spend years in building them? The Finns were using a new anti-tank obstacle shaped like a railway-buffer, cheaply put together from wood bound with iron bands and the interior stuffed with blocks of granite off the local hills. This was not an ersatz production of Dr. Todt but a purely Finnish idea.

I stopped at the concrete fort in which General Govarov lived on the eve of the offensive. You reached it up a communication trench completely roofed with pine branches; down below the sun dappled the nice dry duck-boards and there was a delicious smell. The Russians are not usually so housewifely about their fighting quarters; it was almost as though they had been inspired by the Finnish example to be as prissy as their enemies. The fort was only 800 yards from the Finnish front line and the domes and spires of Leningrad were plainly visible over my left shoulder. It was amusing to contrast the massive concrete exterior of the fort with the interior, which was electrically lit and contained Louis Seize chairs. The second Finnish line was along the Raivola River and the third was the old Mannerheim Line. According to the Russians the Todt organisation in 1941 removed the best installations from the Mannerheim into the second line, so that this was actually the strongest of the three.

Govarov began with a barrage delivered by 200 guns along each kilometre. The 10th, 2nd and 15th divisions of Finnish infantry held the first line, the 3rd and 18th divisions were along the second line with one cavalry and one motorised division. A Finn division is anything between ten and thirteen thousand men.

We moved up the isthmus with streams of Russian troops advancing through the forests in green and brown camouflaged uniforms. The spot where the second line was pierced was a lovely forest glade that had been widened by a swathe of gunfire. But just beyond the Raivola River, it narrowed again into a lane bordered by hedgerows, savoury as English ones. The country became the prettier the further you got away from Leningrad and here all that sombre dark green of Russia had already given place to the lighter tones, the more feathery trees, the neater houses of

Europe. A couple of light tanks with the Finnish swastika on them were the only relics of war. As we drove up the road Red Army girls, knowing some Allies were coming, halted the jeeps and offered us lilac and lilies of the valley, plucked from the gardens of the deserted villas. We passed on, and the lark ascending alone broke the silence of the forest. Only when you saw the houses smashed by the retreating Finns—the sofas with even their springs ripped out so that no Russian might make himself comfortable on them—the crops burnt to cinders—only then did you realise the bitterness of this enemy and why the Russians swear that this small but berserk people must not be allowed to run wild again.

We were now getting near the front and when two women of the party withdrew down the road in search of privacy they were halted by a general driving by who asked for their papers and looked startled when they announced that they were English. They were saved from more serious embarrassment by the arrival of a lorryload of Russian nurses, belonging to a Guards division, who with becoming modesty and sisterly feeling, took them with them when they disappeared into the woods on the same errand.

At the foot of a tree I found the body of a Finnish sniper—a “Cuckoo,” as the Russians call them—who had been shot out of his perch. His papers showed him to be a boy of eighteen.

We were all for continuing up that road, and our army escorts all for taking us, when the Foreign Office began to play its usual sabotaging rôle. The colonel in charge was taken aside by our “Nark” escort, who evidently told him that we were already closer to the front than we should be. As a result, the civil arm overruled the military and we were told it was time to “go home.” An angry, impromptu meeting of war correspondents then took place and it was pointed out that so far we had not even heard a shot fired. The Foreign Office man said he was responsible for our lives (which was true) and that he could not possibly allow us to go any further. As a matter of fact, he might have been in some danger himself had we done so, because his grey uniform with its peaked cap with crossed palms and no red star might have been mistaken for a German one. But that of course was not the reason for his refusal. The Soviet authorities had laid down at the beginning of the war that no Allied correspondent must be killed in Russia and officialdom obeyed this to the letter. I am sure they agreed that it was pleasanter and more comfortable for all concerned, including themselves, to see the war from a respectful

distance. However, they did not wish to be disobliging. And so occurred the most shaming incident I had yet experienced in four years of war reporting. . . . While we were vainly arguing the case for going up as far as the guns, some light ack-ack just close to us began firing. We searched the sky. The aircraft must be very high. But still, we looked around for shelter, found some trenches and got into them. Then the firing stopped. A grinning lieutenant came over to us and said: "Well, how did you like it? The Narkomindel comrade told me you wanted to hear the guns firing. . . ."

After that, we turned away from the Mannerheim Line in disgust and set a course for the nearest Russian airfield. On the way we passed the villa by the sea that had belonged to Repin, the only painter of genius Russia has yet produced. The houses next to it were undamaged. There had been no shelling hereabouts. But the Repin villa had been burned to the ground. Nothing remained among the ashes except the painter's bath tub and the metal umbrella-stand from his front hall. The house, although it was across the Finnish border, had been preserved as a Russian state museum. The Finns had done a thorough, if pointless job in destroying it before they withdrew.

We came to the most advanced airfield on the isthmus, from which Red planes were running a shuttle service, strafing the Finnish divisions that were falling back from the Mannerheim Line. In the glorious white nights, with scarcely any darkness, the pilots were doing as many as five or six missions daily. The airfield, one of the largest I ever was on, was surrounded by a pine forest. The machines, including a lot of Aerocobras, were beautifully concealed in large shelters made of logs and roofed with the branches of trees. We sat on some benches under the trees to hear the pilots being briefed. The colonel who did this job, Alexander Matveyev, a man of thirty-three with grey hair, had to shout to make himself heard above the roar of continually taxi-ing planes.

He told me that the fighters and Stormoviks under his command had flown up to 1000 sorties daily from this one field.

"The distance is very short," he said. "We get there and back in less than an hour. But it's very hard on the boys. This field was right in the front line for years; it was very important during the siege of Leningrad. The Finn front line was 5 miles away and right up to the eve of our offensive they were shelling us every day."

Matveyev said he had fought in four wars—in Mongolia

against the Japanese, the Finnish war, the present war and "the fourth war you may guess."

I guessed it was Spain and he did not contradict.

We watched 6 Stormoviks escorted by 4 "Lavochkin 5" fighters take off to attack objectives beyond the Mannerheim. They raced over the bumpy field, the wind behind them, a raggle-taggle of hornets, but were airborne almost as soon as they were at full throttle. Once in the air, their disorderly showing on the ground was forgotten as they soared away in neat formation. While waiting for them to come back we went over the field. The type of men we met—as in most air forces—seemed to be several grades above the infantry in both physical and mental build. The average Soviet infantryman seems a simple, old-fashioned soul, fond of folk songs and country dances. But these fellows talked in quick, clipped slang and played American jazz tunes (not so many years out of date) at full blare upon portable gramophones—just like their opposite numbers in the R.A.F. However, the atmosphere of the squadron mess was very formal and not merely because foreigners were there. No "pin-up" girls graced the walls, which were covered instead with heroic mottoes and slogans. Tacked on the trees outside was a "wall newspaper" with the Union Jack and Stars and Stripes as well as the Red Flag on its masthead: this featured the latest news from France, with a map of the Allied operations there and a report of an American air-raid on Tokyo. It carried a "scoreboard of revenge" showing the planes each pilot had downed since the offensive began. One pilot had scored six victories in a week, another three in one day.

Presently Lieutenant Serov, a jovial plump young man who has scored 36 victories, flew in and reported to "Daddy Matveyev" as he called him that his formation had blown up three dumps and two trains on the isthmus.

A lieutenant-colonel wearing two gold Stars of Hero of the Soviet Union joined us. He was Piotr Pokrishiev, who had downed 30 aircraft in 300 missions, most of which had been low-level strafes. Born in Odessa 30 years before, he was brown-eyed and black-moustached, strangely like Governor Thomas Dewey in appearance. Eleven of his victories had been scored flying Tomahawks, the rest in Russian fighters. Colonel Matveyev said Pokrishiev had started as a private. "He was my pupil and I'm proud of having brought him on. Look, he now commands an air regiment."

Two more lieutenants came in to report the results of their

missions. No planes had been lost and the Finnish ack-ack had been weak. We had a meal in their mess. When someone proposed a toast to meeting in Helsinki, Matveyev replied, "Not Helsinki. That's small beer. Let's say Berlin—even though we have to camp in tents in the centre of the city."

We stayed four days in Leningrad. Using it as a base, we set out every day towards the front, knowing full well that we should never be permitted to catch up with it. Our best encounter was with some Finnish prisoners. We sat in a field odorous with wild flowers. The Finns were allowed to come and sit with us while an uninterested Russian sentry threw stones into the brook nearby. Precisely the same things that were written about Soviet prisoners during the Finnish war could have been said about these lads: they were mentally confused and their boots and uniforms were poor and torn. They all agreed in thinking that Mannerheim's Schutz Korps would try to raise guerrillas to fight on after Finland had acknowledged defeat. The Finnish workers and farmers would oppose this, they thought. They were all privates, mainly countrymen, and they agreed that the working folk of Finland wanted to end the war at once, though to do this they would have to throw out their government, which had already refused the Russian peace terms.

The Schutz Korps is the Finnish Territorial Army, mostly of the new middle-class and small landowners created by the Lex Kallio. Once it totalled 100,000 men but by this time had been much depleted. The prisoners said that the news of the Second Front made them "dance for joy" because they knew it would shorten the war. But they advanced strange theories to explain why their country thought it might have got away with its war policy.

"We thought Russia was too tied up elsewhere to attack us now . . . Germany seemed beaten anyhow, so we hoped the problem of Finland might be settled on the side, as it were, without fighting."

A thirty-five year old farmer with a grey cropped head and cavernous eyes who owned 13 acres said: "We knew of the Russian terms. Some thought them too hard but hardly one thought they could not have been accepted."

A farm lad of eighteen said: "The officers kept giving us political pep talks. But I was in charge of a horse and cart, so I missed them all."

All agreed that the food situation was not bad in the countryside but very serious in the towns, where manual workers were getting 14 kilos of flour a month and non-manual 6 kilos. As Russian prisoners, they got 600 grammes of bread daily as against 450 grammes in their own army and three meals daily, including soup, fats, sugar and some tinned meat.

I know that their ration was considerably better than that received by the families of Red Army men themselves.

The Soviet offensive drove on up to Viborg, then halted. Helsinki was spared. Again, the Russians intimated that they would receive a peace delegation. And after further procrastination the Finnish politicians accepted. Had they come to terms the first time, when with the rout of the Germans south of Leningrad their situation obviously became hopeless, they would have saved the lives of some 40,000 soldiers, both Finnish and Russian, who perished because those foolish imponderables "National Pride" and "Military Glory" had to be kow-towed to. The Mannerheim Line had to be broken twice before the Finns came to their senses. If my son or brother had been killed in this totally unnecessary offensive I would have felt like giving short shrift to Tanner and the other Finnish politicians whose stubbornness decreed that it should happen. I would not have dined them and wined them, as the Russians did.

When you remember that men and women went through indescribable tortures and had to eat human flesh in Leningrad (when they could get it) because these same Finns assisted the Germans to besiege the city, the subsequent behaviour of the Russians to vanquished Finland has been a marvel of charity and restraint. This needless slaughter on the isthmus was but the last draught out of the bitter cup which Russia received from her hands.

VICTORY IN WHITE RUSSIA

I.—VITEBSK

ON JUNE 23RD, 1944, three armies surged forward along a front of 200 miles in White Russia. This was the offensive which those Finnish prisoners had thought might have "tied up" the Soviet Union to such an extent that Finland would have been spared. From Pskov in the north to Chernowice in the south the offensive soon spread; it went forward with scarce a pause until by August 2nd the armies of Rokossovsky, Zaharov, Bagramian and Cherniakovsky had liberated all White Russia and the Ukraine and a wide section of Poland between the Curzon Line and the Vistula. By August second Rokossovsky was in Praga, looking at Warsaw across the river while to the north Kaunas, Vilna, Daugavpils and Yelgava were free and Riga cut off by a thrust to the coast of the Baltic.

On the night the offensive began I had dinner in Moscow with Ralph Parker of the *Times*, James Aldridge, Duncan Hooper of Reuters and our ambassador. As usual when the Russians launched something big, we knew nothing about it. But the ambassador seemed restless and apologised for having to leave us soon after dinner. He was going to see Mr. Molotov. After he had gone, we speculated idly as to what could have taken him away and came to the conclusion that it was probably Poland. In this I think we were right. The Russians had started a drive to liberate the greater part of Poland and here were we and the United States not merely "recognising" the exiled government in London, as before, but considering the Polish National Committee to whom Russia intended to hand over the administration of the country as just a boxful of Communist "puppets." Here was a wide ground on which needful political adjustment could take place, now that the guns were speaking.

The first blow fell north and south of Vitebsk, which for over 2 years had been a German fortress from which all civilians had been banned, only 275 miles from Moscow. Within three days its deep water defences had been nullified by complete encirclement

and we were on our way, in our usual Douglas plane, to see the liquidation of the garrison. The Russians were advancing through country saturated in Napoleonic history. After Vitebsk, which Napoleon had entered at the head of his guards on his march to Moscow just 132 years before, they pressed on to the River Beresina.

Thousands of captured Russians had been forced to dig a supplementary defence line behind Vitebsk. Learning at last from bitter experience, the Germans installed a deep-dug line where their troops could shelter while the barrage burst in full violence upon the first line.

It was Bagramian and Cherniakovsky who closed the trap on Vitebsk. The first prisoners they took said they had only heard of the landings in Normandy through the Russian loud-speakers across No Man's Land.

Private Emil Schneider said: "Instead of upsetting me, the news rather calmed me down. The nearer the end, the better. As we say, 'Better a terrible end than Terror without end.'"

On the dead body of Private Alfred Fromhertz was found a letter to his wife which never got posted. "There's a lull here," he had written, "and the Russians won't advance while the Tommies and Yanks are doing the same. Each in his turn. Let our Good-for-Nothings who drank French wine and went dancing learn what war is like. *We* will have a quiet summer."

Our plane came down at Smolensk and we drove through the Katin forest, where the thousands of Polish officers had been found murdered earlier in the war, towards Vitebsk. We had lunch in a rest-home for workers in the Kremlin which perched on a wooded hillside above a winding river. It was a very comfortable place; the war had passed it by though Smolensk had been smoking from a German air raid the night before and they were still digging people out of the ruins of their cottages.

Three hours ago General Fritz von Gollwitzer, officer commanding the 53rd German Army Corps, scrambled to his knees from where he had been lying on his face, raised his arms above his head and called out "Kamerad." The general had around him twenty men capable of fighting and 180 wounded.

Now in a peasant's cottage behind the lines he is trying to explain to us how it was that his five divisions were encircled west of Vitebsk with the loss of 32,000 lives, all the rest surrendering. Not one German escaped.

Paunchy, his uniform creased and dirty and his long grey whiskers testifying to days without shaving, Gollwitzer sits on a bench with Russian interrogating officers facing him across a table and his chief of staff, Lieut.-Colonel Schmitt, a man in the early thirties with a receding forehead and a weak chin, by his side.

Gollwitzer's Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross is still around his neck. At the first question, Gollwitzer rises, clicks his heels, gives the Hitler salute and says his age is 55. His home is in Franconia. He gazes at his broken and dirty boots as he says: "Several days ago my front, with Vitebsk at the centre, was broken through on both flanks and I was forced to concentrate on Vitebsk.

"By order of the High Command I broke my divisions up into storm groups to try to break out to the south and south-west. I myself led the first group which broke through the first Russian circle all right but could get no further. My radio was cut because the Russian air force, which was very strong, had gone for my communications vehicles deliberately and smashed them up.

"I must praise my men," says Gollwitzer, in the tone of a man making his last will and testament (and the Russian officer sitting next to me whispers: "No doubt he thinks we are going to shoot him soon"). "They went on fighting even when wounded but food was so short and there was so little medical aid we could not go on. I refused one enemy demand to capitulate absolutely and we fought on from there. General Hitter, commanding my 206th infantry division, was fighting with me but I lost him and only now I hear he's a prisoner and already in Moscow. Finally we had no more ammunition and had to give in. We fought on like that because we hoped to tie up Russian troops as long as possible and prevent their use elsewhere."

Gollwitzer looked obliquely at the ground in an absent manner as he spoke (though later a Russian girl who was present protested: "The old blighter was looking at my legs all the time!").

Asked how it was the Russians once again had managed to encircle so many Germans the general said the Russians had numerical superiority on one sector of an enormously long front because no doubt the German command thought other sectors more important for the time being.

I asked him how it was that a similar disaster had befallen the Germans at Cherbourg, where the Allies did not have numerical superiority.

Gollwitzer smiled acidly and said: "I am not informed of these events."

Answering further questions he protested his belief that Germany would still win the war, that Hitler was the best leader for the German race, and so on. Gollwitzer had been 36 years in the army and on the Russian front since the beginning. Asked why the Germans came to destroy and lay waste the Soviet Union the general said, still more acidly: "Personally I came here because there was a war on."

Then he began to shoot a line that made every eyebrow in the room rise.

"*Really*," he said pettishly, "I don't feel like answering any more. I'm awfully tired. Can't you see that?"

He is asked if Russian prisoners get a chance to go to bed just because they feel tired and replies, without interest: "I haven't the least idea. I wasn't there."

The Russian officer in charge suggests the general should go to bed while Schmitt, who has been sitting mum all along, answers a few questions. But at once Gollwitzer protests: "He cannot answer questions, except in my presence."

And so this reluctant dragon is suffered to go. Outside, awaiting my jeep, I see him dozing off on Schmitt's shoulder.

An hour later, on the battlefield itself, General Peter Ivanov, second in command of the Vitebsk front, gives me a very different picture of what really happened. Says he: "It's not true at all that Gollwitzer fought to the last. Of course he knew that what he said to you would be printed, so tried to put the best face on it. Actually, after the enemy unsuccessfully tried to break encirclement, we gave them an ultimatum, promising full care for the wounded and that all lives should be spared. A German prisoner was sent through the lines and shortly after he delivered the message a white flag went up.

"Gollwitzer accepted these terms as soon as he heard them but their groups were all split up. When they saw the white flag on one hill they put it up on another. This was the quickest liquidation of an encirclement yet—only 3 days. Khorsun-Shevchenkovsky, you remember, was a fortnight and Stalingrad several weeks. Four transport planes succeeded in parachuting ammunition to them; those were the only planes that got through. Two divisional generals were killed, Hitler was captured and two are still missing."

We drove up to one area of encirclement some four miles wide by seven long. It was evening and in the distance I saw a cloud of dust approaching. From out of the setting sun, over a blood-red skyline, two hundred Germans came shuffling, some without boots, some famished, all in a miserable condition. They were carrying their dead shoulder high, slung on poles.

It was like the last scene in *Hamlet*.

The wounded were being held up by their comrades. Last of all came a tatterdemalion figure.

He stops by me and gapes. Not a pretty fellow—hooded eyes, duelling scars and a sour drooping mouth—the very spit of the Prussian officer of the cartoons.

"I am Lieut.-Colonel Hans Joachim Göttig," he says. "Who are you?"

I see no reason for submitting to interrogation by this unpleasant looking Boche and give myself the satisfaction of looking him over from his dirty cap to his broken boots, without saying anything.

"Not a Russian, surely?" he continues.

When I tell him who I am the face of the sergeant marching before him becomes charged with hatred and disbelief.

"Englishmen in Russia? Not possible," says the sergeant, and spits on the ground.

The colonel says that he surrendered three miles up the road. Recovering a little arrogance, he asks: "Is there no conveyance?"

A peasant cart full of old women is creaking past. The colonel requests, and is granted leave, to drive into captivity on this.

On the road into the biggest encirclement area it is dust and dead horses, dead horses and dust for miles. White dust like bad-smelling face-powder. Then come the dead men. Iris is travelling in another jeep so I cannot see how she is taking this. I never thought to see slaughter on such a scale. Many of the crucial battles of history we used to read of at school did not entail such a massacre as this.

We drove slowly into the centre of the encirclement. It was a warm evening. The light was holding well. An appalling stench had entered my nostrils some miles back and was now become almost a part of my consciousness. It was not just that one was aware of a bad smell: it was that one felt personally sullied by it, as though one's own nose stank, instead of merely acting as a conductor for these horrible sensations.

How many dead? Did I see the whole 32,000? Maybe not, but after a few miles one had seen so many that one's mind stopped recording, I gave up counting the German bodies when I reached 700, and that was very early on. They lay in every conceivable posture, having met death in every conceivable manifestation—by shellfire, bombs, strafing from the air, sniping, fire caused by Stormoviks, bayonets, revolvers machine-guns.

It is striking how many of them are young boys. Here is a farm lad of 17, with Dickens's *Christmas Carol* in German translation by him. He lies gazing at the sky in a field of sweet clover. Here's one with a fistful of worthless Occupation marks in his dead hand—some sardonic Russian must have thrust them there. On the road a long motor column has been utterly destroyed—amphibious German jeeps for crossing rivers, petrol-carriers and trucks have all caught fire. The charred bodies of their crews are still inside them. Here the carnage is overwhelming. Dead Germans lie thickly athwart the road and piled in ditches where they had vainly sheltered. It is difficult to avoid driving over them. In one place it was impossible. Burial squads are at work but it will take days to sweep this pest-house clean.

I am impressed by the shocking fragility of the human frame. One notices sometimes how easy it is to cut oneself shaving, how a slight mishap with hammer or nail can produce a sizable wound or poison a whole hand, so it should not be a surprise to find how easily a man can be knocked into pulp. Yet we like to think of ourselves as strong animals, with a high resistance to all hurts. In peacetime the potential murderer may ponder for days or even weeks while aspiring to a design so complex as the killing of another man. But once you have seen this kind of thing you realise killing is childishly easy. A delicate woman, with one blow from a metal instrument, can bring a man down insensible; a woman with a tommy-gun could annihilate a whole platoon. This was the lesson, of course, which Hitler and Goering and the other Nazis brought back from their experience in the last war.

A man who has received a tommy-gun slug in the head no longer has a head. That is what it amounts to. Here there were apparently whole bodies which had been killed by one small bomb splinter. Some were in grotesque or obscene postures. One man had his trousers blown off so neatly that you might have supposed him "debagged" in farcical play. Another, covered in bandages, lay on the stretcher on which his comrades had been carrying him

to a dressing-station when the bomb had exploded which killed them all. Some had no heads, others no legs. One or two lay smiling in the grass as though no shot had ever struck them.

I am bound to say that the sight of all these Germans did not distress me a whit. And later I found that Iris was not much upset either. I had seen enough already of what the Germans had done in Russia to derive even some satisfaction from this spectacle. When I saw a few wounded Germans, I felt sorry for them. And a badly wounded man I just cannot bear to look at at all. But these men looked just like waxworks. They were dead. They were gone. Many no doubt had richly and individually deserved to die and those who were innocent, by bringing grief to others near to them, might impress on these others a lesson which the German people still had need to learn. You had only to talk to some live German prisoners to realise with horror that some of these men, far from regretting what Germany had done, were already thinking in terms of how Germany might contrive to do it all over again—but next time, successfully.

Among the hundreds of dead horses from the baggage trains were a few tiny foals. Here were "good Germans" at last. Delicious little creatures, they roamed pathetically among the dead. Russian peasants were rounding them up.

Thousands of letters and papers belonging to the dead blew over the poppy-covered fields. Here was an engraving of Hitler lying over a dead man's face, here a novel of the last war, *The Game in Flanders*, lying next to the body of a mere schoolboy with the photo of the sweetheart in Darmstadt who gave it to him pasted on the flyleaf. Here was an Invasion Day copy of the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, with flaring headlines announcing the Second Front. Here were maps of the "West Wall" and the Siegfried Line.

In a wood just ahead of us two Germans were found asleep. They had not eaten for three days. When they were led past these frightful spectacles, saw the full horror that had overwhelmed their 53rd Army Corps, the bodies of their comrades littering the earth as far as the eye could see . . . you detected in their faces some ground for hope that the German common people would one day learn their lesson, even though their generals and colonels still seemed unchastened.

Then through the midst of this stinking German Golgotha came striding a rosy buxom Russian peasant girl, full of the joy of life, a string bag filled with rye bread on her arm. Not a whit

abashed by all she saw around her she waved to us and smiled, picking her way among the stray mines and the dead men.

And why should she not rejoice? If I had lived three years under the Germans as she had done, I would be smiling too.

We slept that night in a field hospital which was, happily, empty. Though it was about to move forward at any moment the usual embarrassing Russian sense of hospitality still operated and the doctors insisted on laying on in their mess the kind of dinner which no one could hope to get in Moscow—hors d'œuvres, onion soup, fresh veal and even ice-cream. Besides vodka they served "trophy" French wine and German cigars. There were toasts to "Victory in Normandy" and "Victory in White Russia." All the surgeons were women under thirty.

Iris, who suffers from migraine headaches, had the good judgment to select this hospital as the venue for her latest attack and spent the next day lying up there while we went up to the front. She was consoled by the plump little nurses, who played the gramophone to her all day long, alternately kissing her and offering her dishes of ice-cream.

Next day, which was the eighth of the break-through, we learned that 63,930 prisoners had been taken and that a second grouping had been encircled at Minsk, which was about to fall. General Ivanov told us that a group of Germans had surrendered to him personally. They came out of a wood and halted his car. The general thought they were going to attack him but they just held up their hands. Every copse seemed to hold stragglers. Shots rang out now and then as we drove along west of Vitebsk. From a spinney just in front of us a solitary German emerged, driven forth by hunger. He had long since thrown away his rifle. He had not eaten for four days and was so dirty that his features could scarce be recognised as human. The biggest prize so far was Major-General Hamann, commandant of Bobruisk, and perhaps the blackest villain yet unhung in Russia. This notorious war criminal had been commandant of Orel and was wanted for authorising the mass shooting there. I had seen his handiwork at Orel in the summer of 1943; once seen, never forgotten. Hamann was taken away under close guard. Such creatures are apt to be suicidal.

In a forest they set up a prisoners' reception point with notices pointing the way to it in German and Russian. Two prisoners arrived in women's clothes. Hans Rundstedt and Theodore

Brockerhof had made the mistake of making themselves too conspicuous; one wore a red skirt with a yellow blouse, a kerchief around the head and a man's blue coat over all; the other wore a White Russian peasant dress, prettily embroidered.

The liberated countryside looked poor and badly cultivated; the Germans did not seem to have made much of it in three years.

We passed columns of Russian infantry moving up. There was nothing showy about them. Rather were they spaced out in small groups over so large an area that they did not even seem impressive as to numbers and it was difficult to appreciate how great was the effort involved. This was definitely one of the biggest routs of the war. The liberation of all White Russia was imminent and west of Slutsk the troops of Rokossovsky (who had just been awarded his marshal's star) stood just under 200 miles from the soil of East Prussia.

One saw the soldiers seated around their cookpot having their meal of Kasha and black bread; the columns on the march with bayonets fixed and a single blanket slung in a bandolier across the shoulder, tanks leaguered in a wood with repair crews busy on them using two birch-trees and a third trunk slung horizontally between them as a crane to lift out heavy equipment. Especially grim were the Klim Voroshilov tanks with their new, monster gun which seemed to project right ahead of the nose itself. The soldiers' uniforms were grey with the dust of many weary miles, their faces the colour of mahogany after months of fighting and sleeping in the open. One private from Siberia told me he had not slept in a bed for two years.

The advance was restoring life and liberty to thousands of civilians whom the Germans had no time to evacuate. Not since the collapse of France in 1940 had I seen such thousands of refugees on the roads. The populations of hundreds of ruined villages were on the move eastward, back to their homes, driving their cows and pigs with them and all their possessions heaped on horse-drawn carts. The use of a high proportion of horse-transport in White Russia was a terrible handicap to the Germans. They had mined the margins of all the roads so that when their horse traffic came to retreat they were an easy prey to air strafing. The drivers could not disperse the horses nor could they move off the roads themselves, for fear of the mines. A horse is a much easier target than a man and the pilots had only to aim at the horses to put whole columns into confusion.

We passed many peasant families who had lost everything except the sack on their backs. One old peasant stopped my jeep and asked for a lift which I could not give, because I was not going his way. The tears rolled down his cheeks as he told how his old wife had died on the roadside. His grand-daughter aged three sat on a pile of sacking under a hedge. Her mother had been carried off by the Germans. Four sacks of old clothes and the baby were all he had left in the world, and I had absolutely nothing to give him, not even a loaf of bread. Peasants who had their cows still were milking them by the roadside for the children and some had rescued their samovars and were "brewing up," as our soldiers would say. The condition of the peasantry just liberated was in the main terrible. The soldiers had little to give them. Though they helped them when they could, the army was moving too fast to do any relief so that the aim of most families was to work through this dense phalanx of advancing soldiers into quieter areas where they might hope for help from the local Soviets.

Near Vitebsk we found a large German cemetery. Among the 4300 graves, each with its Prussian cross, there were several hundred with Russian names, described on the headstones as "Cossacks." These were the soldiers of the traitor general Vlassov, one of the most curious figures of this war who after playing a big part in the defence of Moscow in 1941, went over to the German lines with a considerable number of his staff and was given the task of raising a Russian army of Liberation to fight the "Stalinites." The Russians say that these men fight like devils, as well they might, for they would get short shrift if they surrendered. But there *have* been cases of Vlassov's men surrendering with the plea that they had enlisted with him only as a means of getting out of prison camps, with the intention of rejoining the Red Army at the first opportunity. There must have been enough instances of this occurring to make the Germans nervous, for after 1943 the "Liberation Army" was little heard of, even in Nazi propaganda, and General Vlassov eked out a shabby existence in Berlin, making occasional broadcasts to Russia which can never have been heard because since the war Russians possess no long-range radio-sets. Having set out to make Vlassov a sort of Nazi General de Gaulle, the Germans were constrained to use him as a Russian Lord Haw-Haw. And like the latter, he will of course conclude his career by dangling at the end of a rope.

2. MINSK

We had to fly back to Moscow because, as usual, there were no facilities for us to remain more than a few days at the front. But within a week we were on the move again.

The intervening days were difficult to live through. The magnitude of the German disaster in White Russia was beginning to approach that suffered at Stalingrad and was in some respects more serious, because whereas Stalingrad was an encirclement deep inside Russia, this was a break-through close to the soil of Germany herself.

Out of the tension of waiting to get moving again I recall only one incident—an evening of "Monopoly" with two Russian girls, to whom we introduced the guilty delights of this capitalist game for the first time. I used to think "Monopoly" sound Tory propaganda, but after watching its effect on these two young Communists, I had to change my mind. At first they revelled in the accumulation of property and the leasing of public utilities and railway station concessions but as the game reached its inevitable end, with one player holding every one else up to ransom with "rents" of £800 and £900 a time, and finally putting everybody into bankruptcy, their indignation knew no bounds. If this was the way "Free Enterprise" or "the American Way" operated, they wanted none of it, even in fun. So perhaps after all the inventor of this game was no sleek stockbroker but a Revolutionary Spirit, "boring from within" the tinselly toyshop world with a propaganda of disruption.

We flew to a field near Borisov with a fighter escort, for there was a big area of German encirclement just south of the Moscow-Minsk highway to which the Germans were sending transport planes, escorted by fighters, dropping supplies. Along the highway the stench of German bodies was so appalling that the burial squads were donning gas-masks. A Stormovik kept diving on to a piece of woodland close to the road, machine-gunning the trees. It was using incendiary bullets which set the dry timber on fire. There was a party of Germans hiding there and this was the easiest way of persuading them to come out. By July 5th the whole German front in White Russia had collapsed over a width of 200 miles and to a depth of 170 miles, into which the Red Army had penetrated at an average speed of 17 miles a day. Field-Marshal Busch's army group which had been based on the pre-war eastern

Poland was in utter confusion and the Russians were now beginning to threaten the flank and the communications of the strong army group in Latvia and Estonia under Colonel-General Lindemann.

July 7th, 1944.—Three German soldiers have just surrendered to us here but thousands more are fighting on in the hope of breaking through to Minsk, which they believe is still in German hands.

The situation is very like that during the fall of France. Soviet armour and cavalry has dashed on miles ahead of us here but north, south and east of Minsk pockets of German resistance remain and are being broken up in small pitched battles. Two days ago twenty thousand Germans were fighting south of Minsk, the remnants of nine divisions from the twelfth and twenty-seventh army corps and the thirty-ninth armoured corps. Now about seven thousand are left in the forests only some seven miles south of Minsk.

This is how we correspondents got our first bag of prisoners since the war in Russia began: In the village of AVCHAT we met a Soviet guards unit which, under a scorching sun, was beating through fields of rye that stood breast high, looking for Germans. They told us the woods between there and Minsk were thick with them, but in three jeeps we swung around the woods to the west and turned back towards Minsk. Entering another forest belt we drove three miles in dead silence, seeing no one. In a glade a score of German rifles lay abandoned. Rather childishly, we picked them up and had some target practice among the trees, then paused to eat the wild strawberries which carpeted the grass in savoury profusion. Not a leaf stirred. But you had that awkward feeling that, just out of sight, there were people about. A mile further on, emerging into a patch of scrub we saw three grey figures ahead with handkerchiefs tied to their caps and white shirts held aloft on sticks. They had their backs to us and cautiously were creeping forward towards open ground.

We stepped on the gas. The three men spun round and faced us. Their faces wore a look of indescribable terror, for as they told us a minute later their officers had told them that if they surrendered, the Russians would undoubtedly shoot them.

One called "Kaput!" and grinned from ear to ear—doubtless a purely nervous reaction—as we surrounded them and called on them to keep reaching.

Another said: "Prisoners, yes? Please, *please!* . . ."

Then as we searched them and they realised they were going to be safe they broke into smiles expressive of such soul-felt relief and happiness as I had never seen on human faces before. Sweating and trembling still, but beaming and nodding their heads like mandarins, they hastened to hand over their papers and to answer questions.

Ernst Anschau, a German; Joseph Sutler, from Maribor, Yugoslavia; and Karl Kaletta, a Czech-German, they were from an infantry regiment of field-marshal Busch's broken army group and if they were at all typical of the rest we could have no doubt that the morale of the marshal's men was no longer what the Fuehrer would desire.

Anschau volunteered: "My name is Ernst, like Thaelmann, whom I used to know."

We didn't believe him. A lot of prisoners now seem to think that to say that they and Thaelmann were buddies once serves as the best social introduction in the U.S.S.R.

As we spoke with them we heard shouts and a whole line of men rose up from the undergrowth a quarter of a mile ahead. A sturdy red-faced figure came striding towards us calling: "Who the devil are you?" I saw a row of Soviet medals glittering on his chest. It turned out to be Lieut.-Colonel Ivan Yarovoi, commanding a Russian infantry regiment. The line of men ahead was the Russian front line.

"I told my men not to fire on you," the colonel explained as he came up. "I thought the Germans couldn't have jeeps, but you popped up in the wrong place entirely, let me tell you." He told us we had crossed the front line. "There are Germans in that wood on the left and on your right the place is lousy with them. That mound is point 217 and here last night we had a big German counter-attack. They tried to break through to Minsk—every prisoner without exception thinks Minsk is still German—and on one sector got as far as the aerodrome but were thrown back."

The colonel said he used eight Katushas against them and broke them up, killing three hundred and capturing three hundred while his second battalion took six hundred prisoners. That morning the Germans still had a field-gun and a mortar firing.

"Now I'm going to attack the Germans in that wood you passed on your right," he added. "Like to stick around and see it?"

Yarovoi lined up two of his platoons under cover and while they were checking over their weapons gave last instructions. He

did it in a much more dramatic style than a British commander would have done.

"The enemy are lying in groups in those woods, comrades," said he. "I order you to attack and destroy them. There'll be one platoon on the left flank, one on the right. Each will have the support of two anti-tank rifles and one heavy machine-gun. You'll also have artillery behind you. All set? Now off you go and good luck."

Just in front of us a seventy millimetre gun began firing at a range of under 1500 yards. I saw black and yellow explosions among the trees. It seemed absurdly close. Behind us a big 120 millimetre mortar lobbed over a few. You saw the mortar bomb clearly, dropping slowly through the azure sky. Then a black burst tore a hole among the trees and hurled trunks and branches into the air.

Ahead of us the infantry fanned out, moved carefully through the undergrowth. Yarovoi fired a rocket signal to co-ordinate this platoon with the other to the left and followed up the attack himself. With him walked a Red Army girl carrying first-aid in a big haversack marked with the Red Cross. The infantrymen, all tin-hatted, carried full kit, including cookpots on their backs. Many had automatic rifles. They came from all parts of the Soviet Union: there were Asiatics among them as well as Ukrainians, White Russians and Jews. Two were lads in their teens, but most were "old sweats" like you see in the British Army. A few with long fierce moustaches might have stepped out of the pages of *War and Peace*.

As our small barrage continued there was no answering fire from the Germans. Doubtless they were saving ammunition and as they were now in the position that Russian guerrillas used to be in, their only hope of surviving a little longer in those woods was to keep mobile and snipe rather than try to hold fixed defences.

Making a thorough tour of the areas of encirclement around Minsk I found the most intricate pattern of pockets and small fronts where a whole division might easily be engaged. From Minsk aerodrome, for example, Stormoviks were rising to strafe the Germans in the woods only 3 miles distant—surely the shortest bombing run in the whole world. Small groups of Germans tried to get from one wood into another to join a larger grouping so that on leaving Yarovoi's front I passed a Russian patrol whose young captain "put a shot across our bows" and made us stop to ensure we weren't Germans trying to escape.

South of Minsk I came up with fifteen tanks with tommy-gunners mounted aboard rumbling up to engage a German grouping which still had its tanks intact. They emerged from a place still labelled "Panzerkaserne," a huge Nazi tank barracks in a park with a wall around. Two miles from Minsk, at a cross roads, two German anti-tank guns had been smashed; their crews lay around, not quietly dead but in the dreadful shapelessness of utter annihilation. A German head wearing a tin-hat reposed in the middle of the road.

Long columns of cavalry and horse-drawn wagons loped across the horizon. Hundreds of the horses were German.

"Those short-tailed nags with fat rumps are Fritzes," explained a tommy-gunner riding in my jeep. Red Army girls were riding many of them. Columns of black smoke arose from woods where Stormoviks had been bombing.

A company of Guards halted with us in a cornfield where twenty German bodies lay tangled, just shot down by their fire. Cossacks galloped by, raising clouds of yellow dust in the fields of golden grain. A sergeant covered in sweat said to me: "They call out 'Hitler Kaput!' but they shoot you in the back when they can. They pop out of those woods in groups of a dozen at a time, fire at you, then run back in."

"They wanted our soil? Well, they've got six feet of it," said a lieutenant, looking down into the dead German faces.

"Pouff, they're just dirtying up Russian soil," said a private.

An old bearded sergeant knelt down by the bodies, gazed compassionately, then said quietly: "Eternal peace . . ."

The young lieutenant said: "Thanks for your visit. We've never seen Anglo-American correspondents before."

His men seemed really pleased to see their Allies and waved and shouted as we moved on.

Going up a dirt road we passed lovely villages with cottages in rich gardens so like English ones, except that the houses were wooden. The hedgerows were odorous with wild flowers. The panorama was like some old print of the American Civil War—thousands of troops and horses moving across rolling fields—almost "the Blue and the Grey" again, for among the greyish Soviet uniforms were knots of men in the dirty grey-blue of the Reichswehr lying exhausted on the ground, just having been taken prisoner. These Germans had had very little food and no water, for the Russians watched the streams and when they came down to

drink, picked them off. Their tongues were swollen like men who have been in a desert. Something had gone radically wrong with the German supply lines for one prisoner said: "The last time we had a full ration was 2 weeks ago. For the last week all we had was one loaf of bread daily between three men. We had to forage for the rest."

With a daring born of utter ignorance of the real situation the Germans kept appearing in the most unexpected places. Last night the Germans held up a column moving along the Smolensk-Minsk highway and a battle there lasted several hours.

At an aerodrome quite 20 miles east of Minsk I was given a Tommy-gunner to guard me when going into the woods to have a rest and was warned not to go too far in, as Germans were there.

During the night we heard machine-gun and mortar fire going on all the time as small German groups tried to rejoin what they supposed was the German garrison in Minsk itself. At 5 o'clock in the morning about 70 Germans actually got into the city and were brought to bay in the middle of the Jewish cemetery. In that mournful acre, between the tombstones and around a huge pit where murdered Jews had been thrown, a battle raged. All the Germans were shot down.

When I got there in the morning a poor old woman was wandering between the graves striking her head with her palm and crying in a transport of grief: "My man was killed just now. . . . We are too good to them—we should kill them ALL!"

Her husband had been killed as he came out of his cottage nearby, perhaps by the very Germans whose bodies lay there.

In the streets of Minsk guerrillas with rifles slung on their shoulders were searching for Germans and Quislings who didn't get away. Forty thousand partisans were operating openly in collaboration with the Red Army in the last days and as I sat on the steps of the town hall (we couldn't go inside, because it was all mined), talking with Ilya Ehrenbourg and Lieut.-General Koslov, Hero of the Soviet Union and leader of the Minsk partisans, groups of Koslov's men came marching back into town from behind the German lines—dirty, some without boots, but the jauntiest looking blades you could hope to see. When they saw their general whom they'd known in worn overalls now resplendent in scarlet and blue, they smiled at him. Koslov waved back and shouted out an address where they could get a meal.

"Without our partisans," said Koslov, "this great victory could scarcely have come so rapidly. The fact that we have armed all our people is one secret of our success."

When the Germans captured Minsk the entire personnel of the regional Communist organisation remained behind. They built up an army in the enemy's rear which eventually had regular air communication with the "mainland" and was armed with field artillery, mortars, tommy-guns and even had its own motor transport. The partisans, who included teachers, newspapermen, doctors and numerous women, "intellectuals" as well as peasants, not only fought but trained cadres to see to the rehabilitation of White Russia as soon as the territory was freed. They stored seeds and agricultural machinery away from the enemy, held classes in public administration and engineering and successfully kept the whole nucleus of Soviet life going on for three years, deep in the enemy's rear. In the forests they hid thousands of civilians wanted by the Germans. One partisan division in the Minsk area alone during 1942 wrecked 149 trains and destroyed 153 locomotives and in 1943 wrecked 220 trains and 237 locomotives and killed nine thousand Germans that year and wounded three thousand.

July 9th, 1944.—I am spending the night in the dead heart of Field-Marshal Busch's broken army group—a stone house with fittings brought from Germany, a wooden balcony lined with window-boxes in Bavarian style, the whole surrounded by a double line of barbed wire and machine-gun emplacements. From here operations were directed while the marshal himself lived in the house adjoining. A stream trickled over a weir at the end of the garden and we bathed in it, though it was repulsive with leeches.

The house is not alone in being equipped like a fortress. Every building of any value used by the Germans in this part of Russia is similarly fortified against attack by the great partisan army which for three years kept the Germans sitting on top of a volcano and which to-day is helping the Red Army polish them off in the huge forest area between Minsk and Lida and Vilna. The guerrilla army had every adjunct of regular soldiers, including its own underground newspaper *Minsk Bolshevik*, and radio equipment on which, in addition to Moscow Radio and the Voice of Free Yugoslavia, it used to listen every night to the 7 o'clock news in English on the B.B.C.

Lieut.-General Koslov told me that Minsk province had 70,000 armed partisans, 15 per cent of whom were women. One of our

party said he'd seen the general dining in a Moscow hotel about a year ago. Koslov replied: "No doubt you did. I flew several times to the mainland on the job, then flew back here again."

Until 1943, the general added, the partisans held actually 85 per cent of Minsk province but when the German front receded the enemy made some gains.

When in the spring of 1944 mass call-ups began for work in Germany, whole villages joined the partisans in the forests to a man.

"The price on my head was at first five thousand marks, then ten, then fifteen thousand," said Koslov, "but this inflation brought them no result!"

"It was one of our members, a woman, who killed the Nazi Commissar-General for White Ruthenia, a man named Kuke. She liquidated him in his apartment and escaped. The Germans killed many in reprisal and threatened to take one thousand Russian lives for each German thereafter."

George Mashkov, once an electrician and now commissar of a partisan brigade said: "My brigade of two thousand men was typical of all. Thirty-five per cent of us had automatic weapons, including twelve machine-guns off German aircraft we had shot down. We had three 45 millimetre guns but few shells. We started manufacturing automatic weapons from rifles in a workshop hidden on an island in the midst of a marsh and we got a few light tanks from the Germans. Medical supplies came from Russian doctors working in German hospitals. By September, 1942, we reached our maximum strength, when ten to twelve would join each detachment daily. Our monthly casualties averaged fifteen to twenty killed with six to eight in hospital wounded. Latterly the price of a tommy-gun from a German soldier was one kilo of bacon, and near the end a German soldier would give up a rifle and ammunition for five eggs; but explosives were always hard to get. When the Red Army was nearing Dzerjinsk, some of our boys who had no dynamite pulled down two wooden bridges with their own hands. It was easy for us really, because all the population helped, giving food and foraging for munitions.

"In September, 1942, an Austrian soldier joined us and fought well all through. The brigade next to mine had two entire Czech companies, one of 80 men, with all its equipment intact from the German Army and its own Czech officers. Now they are joining the Czech regular forces in the U.S.S.R."

As I was talking with the partisans a long column of prisoners came stumbling down the road, many carrying their boots because their feet were too sore to wear them. We estimated a thousand men in that column. A German colonel was marching at the head. The faces of the partisans were a study to watch as the Germans went by, but no comments were made. Generally I found the Russian attitude to Germans, once they had been captured "officially," as it were, extremely correct. But what happened to Germans who did not attain that happy state was another matter. Russians gave the prisoners cigarettes and along the road peasants in some cases gave hunks of bread and water.

Although most of the prisoners from the forests looked all in and emaciated after ten days of low rations, the impudence of some was still insupportable.

One twenty-four year old from Solingen drew me apart and said: "You're an Englishmen? Tell me frankly, doesn't the fact that the Russians are pressing west all the while worry you English almost as much as it does us?"

I asked him if he was aware that Britain had a twenty-year alliance with Russia, that this alliance was deeply popular with the British people with whom the prestige of the Red Army was second to none and that at Teheran plans were made for the occupation of Germany by all the Allies, regardless of which happened to touch German soil first.

He then gave me some of the old Rudolf Hess stuff about what a tragedy it was that England and Germany should be fighting each other at all.

A few miles up the road, closer to Borisov, the chief of our military mission at Moscow, Lieut.-General Brocas Burrows, was having similar talks with prisoners at the same time. General Burrows was visiting the chief of the Russian general staff, Marshal Vassilievsky, at his headquarters, where the 19 German generals who had been captured had been taken for questioning. One of these generals told Burrows: "The Russians have far more men than we, better equipment than we and more of it. I cannot deny that we are absolutely whacked."

But another German general told him he would be glad if General Burrows would "use his influence with the Russians" to get him into a comfortable camp.

Whereupon our general replied: "Ask no favours from me, you buzzard, for I've just seen the disgusting things you've done

in White Russia. . . . I marvel at your impudence in expecting special consideration."

And indeed, after seeing a great many prisoners, that was my own reaction. One was amazed at the gall of some of these Germans, as soon as they had an hour or two to recover their poise after capture. Remembering the *Daily Mail's* campaign in the Twenties "These Junkers will get us yet," I felt that the slogan for to-day should be, "These Nazis still think they can win the Peace." They had smooth answers for everything. Not one of them, of course, had ever seen an atrocity. They airily admitted to having *heard* of such things but they were "just soldiers" and had had nothing to do with anything like that.

As they marched into Minsk, which had been flattened proportionately as badly as Warsaw by German bombing, one could not detect any sign of regret or repentance—just self-pity, that they personally should be on the losing side. The Czechs, Yugoslavs and Alsatians in the German ranks were different. With them you felt you were talking to fellow Europeans. But these pure Germans seemed to be about as redeemable as a flying-bomb. If these dehumanised creatures were typical of a Germany going down in defeat how heavy, you felt, was going to be the job of making Germany again answerable to heart and conscience.

Their equipment seemed good, though the quality of their thin summer uniforms was not impressive. Their boots were defective. Some wore Russian-style boots but had not bound their feet with cloth inside in the Russian style, so that the friction of coarse socks caused many cases of bad feet. They had plenty of cigarettes and the officers had French wines and Czech mineral waters. In their kit I found a good deal of ballad poetry and love stories of an extremely sentimental kind.

North-west of Minsk I came across the most perfect little cameo of Nazi mentality I had yet encountered. There were some three miles of railway line that had been strafed by Stormoviks. A double line of trains that had been trying to get reinforcements into Minsk was smashed up there, most of them burned out. One train had contained a field punishment battalion of the German Army who are always sent into the forefront of the battle. The bodies of many of these military convicts lay on the line, along which fluttered voluminous dossiers of the courts-martial at which they had been sentenced for crimes ranging from theft to bestiality.

How Germanic, to send men into battle to die carrying with

them the legal documents which proclaimed their crimes to the world! Under the embankment, the few who had escaped were washing themselves in a brook, guarded by a few Red Army men.

I picked up the dossiers of two privates. The first had broken into a Russian cottage, ravished a woman and then killed a Russian man who came to her aid. He got six months of field punishment. The second was accused of making an indecent assault upon a horse, the nature of which was described with a wealth of detail over two foolscap sheets of paper. This horse was the property of the German Army, emphasised the prosecutor; *ergo*, although but a dumb beast, it was entitled to the full protection of the law which provided for the defence of the purity of German stock. And so this horse-fancier got a three-year sentence.

On July 10 Lieut.-General Mueller, commanding the 12th Army Corps, surrendered with all his staff. They were emaciated and parched with thirst when they stumbled out of the woods. Mueller was the sanguine soul who, night after night, from his hide-out in the forests near Minsk, had been ordering his men to break through into the city, which he assured them was in German hands. Thousands of his men were killed or captured in trying to do so. The last prisoners, however, depicted Mueller as less of a Don Quixote and more of a Brer Fox than he had seemed. They said that latterly Mueller's radio was got working again and that over it he received orders from Hitler's H.Q. in East Prussia to break through to the south-west, but that he decided to conceal from his men that both Minsk and Baranowice were in Russian hands lest they realise the futility of Hitler's orders. When this realisation finally sunk in, Mueller knew the game was up.

On our way back to Moscow two Douglasses set down at the same aerodrome, going west, and disgorged a crowd of purposeful looking men and women in leather coats and carrying dispatch cases—the members of the government of Lithuanian S.S.R. on their way up to the front, in readiness to go into Vilna as soon as the Red Army got there.

Back in Moscow, the first fruit of the victory was apparent in the restoration of annual holidays, which had been suspended since the war began throughout the Soviet Union. Before the war every citizen was entitled to a fortnight's holiday on full pay and considerable numbers received as much as a month, but since then school and university teachers were the only people who got

regular holidays, and in practice they had to spend most of their holiday time in war work.

This summer the teachers were to receive their full vacation, also the theatrical profession, which had played without a break at the front and in evacuation since 1941. Workers in Soviet institutions and factories would get their turn as soon as the rest-homes had been refurbished. But no one would be able to travel long distances. In the first few months of the war the weekly day off was abandoned altogether but was generally restored by 1942 because it was found essential to the workers' health. However, a vast amount of overtime had been worked all over the country and millions urgently needed a break. But the principle of no home leave for the fighting services continued. The soldier at the front got lay-offs in the rear areas, but because of the millions involved and the vast distances it had been found impossible to allow any home leave since this would entail the movement of something like 200,000 to 300,000 men over the railways every week in the year.

All Moscow turned out for the first great victory parade of the war on July 17th. Down the Leningrad Chaussée, past Tchaikovsky Concert Hall, on whose roof the American and Canadian Ambassadors stood watching, through the outer ring of boulevards swung seemingly endless columns of soldiers marching twenty abreast—all of them German prisoners fresh from the débâcle in White Russia. Twenty German generals led the procession with iron crosses tinkling on their breasts. Mounted Russian soldiers of the N.K.V.D. regiments with drawn sabres guarded them and Russian infantry with bayonets thrust forward marched behind each contingent.

From where I stood at Mayakovsky Square the procession was two miles long.

There were precisely 57,000 of them. The Moscow Militia announced over the radio: "Citizens must keep order and must not permit themselves any demonstrations in regard to the prisoners." This last was probably superfluous. A crowd estimated at over one million lined the route, but they gazed at the Germans with a sort of serene curiosity and rarely did I hear a bitter comment.

"So you've got to Moscow at last, what do you think of it?" a Red Army major called out.

"They're a tame-looking lot," said a grandmother with a

handkerchief tied around her white hair, "but they would have acted very different if they'd got in here in 1941, let me tell you."

Some flappers giggled among themselves as one said: "A poor looking lot. Can't imagine any Russian girl wanting a fellow like that."

Militarily, however, they were far from a poor lot. Mostly between twenty-one and thirty-five, they looked sturdy beneath their beards and their dirt. Not one was wounded, though some who had lost their caps had handkerchiefs bound around their heads to ward off the hot sunshine. A few Red Army officers marched between the detachments, each of which had a Red Army medical girl marching behind with a first-aid bag, in case any man should fall out. So far as I could see, none did.

Gorky Street was closed to traffic from early morning and underground stations along the route were also closed to prevent a dangerous crush in the centre of the city: nevertheless I never experienced such crowds in the Metro and it was a wonder people were not squeezed to death.

Old Muscovites told me such throngs had not been seen here since Papanin and The Chelyuskin heroes—for whom the "Hero of the Soviet Union" was created—paraded through the city ten years ago on their return from the Arctic.

It was a glorious day for a parade, with aircraft gambolling among the fleecy clouds overhead and ice-cream vendors doing a brisk trade on the pavements. The holiday atmosphere reminded one of the Lord Mayor's show in London. Every girl seemed to be in her best silk or cotton dress: the men in linen suits or embroidered blouses.

The German Army gets pretty frequent home leave so many of these Germans must have seen Berlin since the R.A.F. and the U.S.A.A.F. really got to work on it. A comparison between that and Moscow must have given them something to think about. Moscow scarcely shows a scar from bombing. The Germans were looking around them with a lively interest. Not many looked downcast. Some were even smiling and I caught one impudent fellow trying to make eyes at the girls.

The smug expression on some German faces annoyed the crowd. I heard one spectator call out: "What they got to look so pleased about?" But a Russian soldier gave the convincing reply: "Comrades, they are the luckiest creatures in the world, just to be alive."

POLAND

ON JULY 24TH the Soviet Foreign Office announced the formation of a Polish Committee of National Liberation on the soil of liberated Poland. A month later I flew to Lublin.

A howl of anguish and surprise went up from a good many editorial offices in both England and America. One could understand their distress over the Moscow announcement, but their surprise was unforgivable. Every correspondent in Moscow had been predicting for months that so soon as the Red Army liberated territory west of the Curzon Line it would be obliged to deal with a provisional Polish administration of some sort; and since the exiled government in London was not acceptable to the Russians as then constituted, and since it felt it had the backing of Britain and America in resisting any change in its composition, then it was obvious that the Russians would have to deal with the best people it could find on the spot.

Unfortunately, some of the editors in the West did not want to look the facts in the face. I saw one telegram which a Moscow correspondent received about this time.

"Unwant further political news on Poland," it read, "we writing it here." And by "we" was not meant Englishmen, in most cases, but Poles. Many papers had "Polish Correspondents," members of that Polish emigration which had reached our shores five years previously, to tell their readers the truth about the terribly tangled situation in Poland itself, and between Poland and Russia. A queer form of "impartiality," indeed! Would any British paper think it right to employ a Soviet citizen to write news about the Soviet Union? Obviously not—the bias would be plain. Yet they did not hesitate to let British opinion on Poland be formed by Poles who hated Russia only a little less—and sometimes a little more—than they hated Germany. The result of several years of Obscurantism on Poland was to befuddle the public mind about the issues involved and to make it necessary for Churchill to spend the greater part of his ten-day visit to Stalin in October, 1944, in re-hashing many stale Polish issues which should have been

settled months earlier, had the papers prepared public opinion for the necessity.

Long after the Soviet Union has achieved full equality in culture and material ease with the West it will still remain a pleasure to get into an aeroplane at Moscow and fly towards Western Europe. The charm of the Russian people and the justice of their institutions cannot make good the stinginess of nature to the Russian land: the soil of Poland is softer, more gracious than that of Russia.

As we flew into liberated Poland it was like entering a sheltered garden after a long walk over a desolate, windy heath. We came hedge-hopping over pretty farmhouses, over strip cultivation and stooks of corn standing like men with round heads in the fields, past wooden Catholic churches and shrines—so low that you could look into the faces of the saints. The dogs ran out to bark at us and the cattle ran into the shelter of the woods. The country had a misleading air of prosperity and indeed we were soon to find that food was much cheaper than in Russia—bread 25 zlotys the kilo, eggs 5 zlotys each and vegetables plentiful.

We landed on an aerodrome which looked from the air like a cornfield. Dispersed under the trees were many aircraft and guns bristled in the haystacks. When we got into Lublin, then just 25 miles behind the front, we found the streets filled with young men and pretty girls in silk dresses. There was very little war damage. The Red Army men had been buried where they fell in taking the city. In the market I saw two graves with red stars over them, right on the pavement. The graves were covered with flowers.

The people did not look starved and they were much better dressed than the Russians. There was a crowd of about 50,000 gathered in the main square to see Marshal Rokossovsky, himself of Polish origin, unveil a monument to the liberating dead. A Polish army band played Chopin's Funeral March as the wreaths were being laid. Polish flags flew on every roof. The people were in an emotional mood. Many of them were in tears. Major-General Sholokovsky, on behalf of the Red Army, was interrupted by cheers when he pledged a "free, strong, independent and democratic Poland," and the whole crowd, including the provisional administration, the marshal and the generals bared their heads and sang together the old anthem, "Poland is not finished yet."

It was only when you spoke to individuals that you began to realise how close Poland had come to being finished, to being obliterated. Aside from the systematic murder of almost the entire Jewish population numbering over three millions, the Polish nation as a whole was now but a shadow of the country we knew in 1939.

Count the black armbands that pass in the street. Every other person is wearing mourning. An English girl named Joan Dickson whose brother is a university professor in England and who is married to a Pole, tells us that the five years she spent under the Germans now seem like a nightmare. Stella Buddy, an American whose father lives in Brooklyn and is also married to a Pole, tells how the S.S. had periodic round-ups in the streets of Lublin, 'seizing people who were thereafter never seen again. Peter Sobolevsky, a doctor of theology, tells how his three brothers were killed by the Germans. He had buried the mutilated body of his youngest brother himself.

"You cannot realise how for 5 years we followed your every up and down," he said. "When France fell, people in Warsaw committed suicide. When you lost Tobruk, people cried in the streets. We knew everything that happened and sometimes we thought we would never be free, so much did we depend upon you."

I had come to Lublin primarily for the political story. But I found that Lublin, the political capital, was not very important. Maidanek completely overshadowed the pretty city a mile away. There could be no doubt that before long all Poles would be united behind one administration because the frightful crimes committed by the Germans in Poland made the usual political differences between Left and Right irrelevant.

As the president of the National Committee, Osubka-Moravski said to me: "Reaction is collapsing in Poland itself. Its *raison d'être* used to be an inclination towards fascism, and anti-semitism. After five years of the Nazis scarcely a single Pole is a fascist now, and there are practically no Jews left alive in Poland, so anti-semitism is pointless."

The provisional government had declared Maidanek "annihilation camp," as the Germans called it, to be a national museum for all time, so that future generations could realise what German Fascism was. I saw citizens standing at the gates waiting their

turn to enter and young men being called up to the Polish Army were going over it before going off to war.

"Unhappily," to quote Moravski again, "part of public opinion in Britain and America favours dealing lightly with the Germans because they never had the Germans on their own soil, but we must all ensure that nothing like Maidanek ever happens again."

This is Maidanek. Two hundred wooden barracks behind electrified wire 25 kilometres square. Towers at intervals of 200 yards with machine-guns mounted in them. Every fifty yards, a bright spot-light to prevent escapes at night, although no one ever got through the electrified wire. The whole place is remarkably like the concentration camps we have seen these past years on the films. But this is a bad film. You have to see the original before you can believe in its monstrous scenario.

I went into a spotless bath-house. What splendid conditions for the prisoners, you felt! Then you notice an iron door giving on to a concrete chamber thirty foot square which could be heated and hermetically sealed. So-called "cyclone gas" was released here and bodies warm and wet from bathing succumbed to it all the faster. I saw felt inserted in the door hinges to make them tighter. Close by were two smaller concrete chambers—one like a safe deposit ten feet long and six high, with a peephole in the wall of thick glass. Seven people were put in here on each square yard. The iron door also has a peephole in it. The door bears the mark of its makers—"Auert, Berlin."

In all there are four chambers where cyclone gas was used and two for carbon monoxide poisoning. The total capacity was two thousand persons at a time. On November 3rd, 1943, according to captured Gestapo guards and surviving prisoners, about eighteen thousand were killed at Maidanek in these chambers and by shooting. Loudspeakers blared all day long in the camp to drown the noise of firing.

Next I saw fourteen compost heaps in a field, each fifty feet long. Medical experts say these heaps are composed of human ashes interspersed with vegetable matter. It was put on fields of cabbages nearby. Also on an experimental farm run by the S.S. These cabbages are enormous. On the field I find small particles of bone and quantities of grey ash. Survivors say the Gestapo gave prisoners these vegetables for cabbage soup, which was the only square meal they ever had.

Nearby are two trenches twenty feet by six, the first graves to

be opened. I cannot count the bodies in here because they are piled one on top of another with rubbish in between; but there appear to be over one hundred. Next I walk towards a windswept hill on top of which is a brick chimney fifty feet high. The hill overlooks the city of Lublin so close that you see people walking in the streets. A filthy smell arises as one reaches the top. This was the crematorium presided over by S.S. man Mussfeldt who had a flat ten feet away from the chimney. At the base of the chimney are five huge brick ovens round which had stood a wooden building which the Germans burned before leaving, so now the whole infamy lies exposed to the winds of heaven.

In front of the ovens bodies lie heaped. The ovens are filled with grey ashes. Witnesses depose that six or seven bodies could be put into the ovens at a time. The fires burned at 1700 degrees Celsius thanks to an electrically-stimulated draft in the chimney and 1900 bodies could be burned here each day. In Mussfeldt's flat you see the charred beds and furniture he used and in a corner of his living-room is a pile of hundreds of small urns stamped on the lid, "Crematorium Buchenwald." Witnesses depose that Mussfeldt sold these urns to the families of the dead, when possible, at from 500 to ten thousand zlotys a time, according to the families' wealth, but they add: "Of course they never got the right ashes."

On the other side of the chimney is an open pen like a pigsty. Here I see about fifty bodies which the Germans tried to burn just before departure. But they had no time to finish the job. Some bodies had been cut up, the quicker to get them into the furnaces. Legs and arms lay neatly separated from their trunks. Nearby is a zinc table just like a fishmonger's slab with water running over it where the bodies were placed for the removal of gold teeth: if Mussfeldt thought any valuables had been swallowed an autopsy was held to recover them.

On big "annihilation days" the ovens were inadequate so bodies were placed in pits, petrol was poured over them then earth placed on top. I saw several of these pits. Bodies from which valuables had been removed had a stamp put on the forehead to show they were ready for burning.

In a pit close by I saw 47 bodies very recently dead. These were thought to be crematorium workers shot by the Germans because they knew too much. In a field of barley just outside the wire four graves are open so far: one contains the bodies of Polish and

Russian war prisoners, mostly shot through the head. I inspected these bullet holes.

A wooden warehouse in the camp is piled eight and ten foot high with boots and shoes. The camp records show eighteen rail-car loads of shoes were sent to Germany. But these remain. It is estimated that about 820,000 pairs of shoes are here. I saw booties of children four to six years old, a wooden leg and a boot for a boy about fourteen, soldier's boots, elegant Paris and Viennese ladies' shoes and civilians' shoes of all kinds. Enough shoes were taken from prisoners' feet in this camp to shoe the entire population of Birmingham. The prisoners were given wooden clogs. Their civilian clothes were stored in a huge warehouse in Chopin Street in Lublin, and they were given ersatz overalls, white with a blue stripe, with a prison number on them. Jews wore a Star of David, Frenchmen a disc with the letter "F," Norwegians the letter "N" and so on.

Twenty-two nationalities were in Maidanek but no British or Americans. I saw quantities of poison gas put up by a German insecticide company of Hamburg and Frankfurt labelled "Giftgas" with a death's head on the container. Other gases were made by "Tesch and Stabenow, contractors for East Elbe, Germany, the General Gouvernement of Poland, Denmark and Norway."

In the same building I saw a whipping post, thousands of passports belonging to prisoners from all over Europe, and personal effects as trivial as teats for babies' bottles.

I then drove 6 miles east to Krempiecki forest where the Soviet-Polish Commission of Inquiry estimates that some three hundred thousand victims from Maidanek are buried. So many mass graves were found here it had been decided not to continue exhumation as the task would occupy months and menace the health of the whole region. I stood by one grave in the forest and saw the bodies of 368 civilians including many women, their lipsticks, handbags, combs, photos and personal letters buried with them. The body of a mother and child, closely interlocked, lay on the grass.

I then drove to the warehouse in Chopin Street, an uncompleted cinema belonging to the Catholic Action Society where the Gestapo stored and sorted loot belonging to the hundreds of thousands of murdered people.

First I saw enormous numbers of suitcases and trunks whose locks had been removed for salvage. A great many bore the names

of German Jews and addresses in the Reich. The auditorium of the cinema was piled high with sacks of clothing awaiting dispatch to Germany and stretching to the ceiling were shelves, neatly catalogued—thousands of razors on one, thousands of women's corsets on another. Medicaments on one floor, women's dresses on another—a ghastly department store of dead men's things. One shelf was entirely devoted to family photo albums, showing happy scenes of holidays in the Alps before Hitler came, weddings and christenings, picnics by the sea. One pile contained nothing but the vestments of rabbis and decoration for synagogues.

The records of this place were intact and showed that as many as 316,000 items were entered in one day. Letters signed "S.S. Polizeifuehrer, Lublin," authorised a German woman settler to draw "one dress, two chemises, one child's boots, one bust-bodice, one corset, two pairs silk stockings" to outfit her family or a German man to carry away two suitcases "of the best quality."

Now came the satisfying experience of attending a session of the Soviet-Polish Commission of Inquiry and hearing S.S. men condemn themselves and from their own mouths admit the whole appalling business. In the Lublin Court of Appeals, while movie cameras turned, captured S.S. men told all. With a brutal imbecility they signed their own death warrants. On the bench sat the Commission, including Monsignor Joseph Krushinski, rector of Lublin's Catholic University, and a Red Army general.

Summarising the evidence given hitherto the Polish prosecutor said the Germans admitted that in ten months of 1943, 600,000 persons approximately were burned in the camp's crematorium and in pits nearby.

The total of victims will never be precisely known but the consensus of the evidence is that it was upwards of one million.

Anton Ternes, aged 53, was a lieutenant in the German Army since 1916, and Ober Sturm-fuehrer S.S. since the war. He's bald. His face is green like the facings of his uniform. He resembles some venomous old bulldog. He grew up in the German Army as an N.C.O. of the old brutal type and his face alone is a passport to a gallows.

Ternes speaks up loud and clear: "There is no doubt that Maidanek was a systematic Vernichtungs Lager," says he. "On November 3rd, 1943, I know 17,000 were killed. Don't ask me why. I was auditor of the camp and sent gold articles of the prisoners

to a central office in Berlin. In one day in October, 1943, I know 300 children were gassed in the chambers and on another day I know 500 men, women and children were gassed."

Theodore Scholen, 41, a Rhinelander, is a Commando Fuehrer with 19 S.S. men under him. Hawkfaced, with a faint nervous smile. He confirmed the November third massacre but thought 20,000 was the total figure. He was confined to barracks that day and saw nothing. The radio played Strauss waltzes to drown the noise of firing. "The camp started as a place of sick war prisoners," he said, "but Jews came later and it then became a place of massacre."

"Yes, children were killed," he said. "I am a family man. I have five children of my own, you know. We were not responsible. The orders came from Berlin. When I first saw the crematorium I was shocked that such men should live, but later I got used to it."

The court asked if Scholen realised he was going to stand trial. He answered: "I can't help that. I am absolutely innocent and never punished the prisoners—why, I gave them cigarettes, bread, anything they wanted. . . ."

His protests are drowned in the laughter of all present until the president says sternly: "Take him away."

Hans Stalp, 31, in a blue civilian shirt, has sunken eyes like a blind man and a twitching mouth. He says he spent 5 years in various camps. His words are mistranslated thus, "I am a butcher who speculated in flesh, and got caught."

This may indeed be true for Stalp was a "trusty" whom the Gestapo favoured. After detailing executions in the gas chamber he casually remarks: "Once I saw ten men and one woman, just arrested, brought in a car to the crematorium and told to undress. The men did but the woman refused so Mussfeldt began to beat her. She cried: "Why am I to die?" and scratched him. Mussfeldt flew into a rage. He called two men who bound her and he cried: "I am going to burn you alive." They put her on the stretcher and pushed her in. We heard one loud scream. Her hair caught fire as she went into the oven. She was Polish, aged 29."

S.S. man Hermann Vogel, 42, from the Ruhr, said he knew the children whose clothes he dealt with had been murdered. He was in charge of two clothing depots. He saw people being led into the gas chamber. "Did we protest about the murders? We could not. The clothing I sent to a bureau at Ploetensee, near Berlin."

Andrew Stanislavsky, 21, a Polish survivor of the camp, said he saw men hanged whilst 2000 prisoners were made to stand and watch and others smothered in piles of liquid manure by S.S. men who stood on their shoulders. He saw bodies being fed to the ovens and hundreds going into the gas chambers.

"Did not these resist and cry out?" asked the court.

"No," answered Stanislavsky. "Those people welcomed the end of all their sufferings."

The Commission announced that the inquiry into Maidanek had been completed and that a decree would be issued setting up special courts to give "special punishment to the guilty." But there are at least two other great camps in Poland at Oswiecim and Treblinka which have also to be investigated.

Leaving the court I met a Breton communist, Corentin le Du, whose wife lives at 1 Rue d'Issy, at Vauves, Seine department.

"Try to tell her I survived," he said. "I spent three years in German camps before coming to Maidanek and, believe me, Maidanek is nothing to what you're going to find in Germany. Often I've seen people buried alive. Daladier was in Buchenwald but I expect he's dead. If I spoke for a month I couldn't tell you what I've seen. But the day of reckoning is coming. We people of Europe who have experienced German fascism will neither forgive nor forget in a hundred years."

I have recounted what I saw at Maidanek in the baldest possible way because the whole business was so appalling that if one gave vent to the natural indignation one felt there would be a danger of emotionalism which might lead to disbelief. Iris, who sat next to me in court, said she felt physically dirty for a long while after, just through having been close to these mad butchers.

During an interval in the inquiry I walked on to the steps to take the air. The plane-trees rustled against the pillars and there was an evening odour of flowers. Suddenly I noticed that all the S.S. men were close to me, sitting on a bench in the corner, guarded by Polish soldiers. These creatures looked at me, blinking and bland.

At that moment if a gun had been put into my hand I would with pleasure have shot the lot of them.

In due course, all of them were hanged.

Of the 45,000 Jews who lived in Lublin in 1939 just 45 are alive now, thanks to obtaining false passports. The daughter of the

well-known Zionist, Professor Sommerstein, who is a member of the Lublin Committee, tells me she and her husband escaped from the ghetto and lived for two years in the forests, disguised as woodcutters. She is an attractive blonde woman who looks like a Hollywood version of a Polish peasant girl, to which happy accident no doubt she owes her life.

In the street a man came up to me and said: "Excuse me, my name is Israel. I survived."

The fact of being alive was so wonderful to him that he had to tell people about it. Walking into the city from the west I met a very pretty girl, aged 19, with her two young brothers, staggering under sacks. The girl's hair was fashionably dressed and her fingernails were vermilion but her feet, in high-heeled shoes, were bleeding. She had come through the German lines and she was laughing aloud for the sheer joy of being alive.

A frantic woman came up to me in the street. She had escaped from Warsaw a fortnight earlier. All her family had been killed in the Warsaw ghetto. Her rich dark hair was going white. She gave her name as Bella Czayka, of a once-wealthy Jewish family.

"You know my cousin, the artist Feliks Topolski in London?" she asked. "Please tell him that I survived. But I fear all *his* family are dead. My husband they killed in Maidanek. Please ask Topolski or my uncle Samuel Schwartz (and she gave me an address in Lisbon) to send me a little money here. I have nothing at all but this dress I wear."

She kept looking over her shoulder as we talked.

"I mustn't talk to you long . . . they are sure to stop me. . . . I've not spoken to any one like you or heard a kind word for five years. . . ." She was still terrified of being arrested. I had to keep telling her that she was now free and could talk to who she liked. The habit of persecution was too strong and she could not believe me.

I went into a Catholic Church where Polish soldiers were at mass. A Red Army officer was among the congregation. The churches were open everywhere. Private shops were doing a big business though the prices were far too high—in many instances worse than they were under the German rationing system. German Occupation zlotys were still being used. Trying to induce some order out of the economic chaos the Germans left behind was the first task of the provisional administration, as we found when we went to the large, freshly-painted government building where the

President of the Committee, Osubka-Moravski, received us. He began by outlining the political set-up.

"We have suggested that Mikolajek should become prime minister and Grabski and Popiel would also be welcome," he said. "We have offered 4 portfolios to members of the London government. We have nothing against Romer except that his foreign policy has been very different from ours and so we have not offered him a seat. The difficulty over the constitution dates from 1939 when we moved to Paris. The American Ambassador Bullitt insisted on the 1935 constitution being retained by the government in exile, although this was an illegal, authoritarian constitution.

"Your British ambassador in Moscow, Clark-Kerr, told me recently that he thought the British Government would agree to the constitution of 1921—our old liberal constitution—but that he could not speak for the American government. Now we appreciate the United States very much, but we cannot allow a foreign government to dictate what form of constitution we should have. Mikolajek doesn't acknowledge the 1935 constitution either, but he told us it would be ungentlemanlike for him to shelve it now, after accepting it for so long. Our view is that a split will develop in London. Time works for us. The more people in Poland see of our programme, the more they will like it. Mr. Mikolajek ought to make up his mind quickly and return here in good time. We've heard nothing from him since he left Moscow."

The government programme as announced by Moravski was certainly not very sweeping. Indeed an English radical might find it somewhat conservative. Moravski said that only the agrarian reform would be carried through—everything else would await the election of a parliament and the choice of a government. Church lands would not be nationalised. The demand for every sort of product was so great, he explained, that it was not a question of nationalising this or that but rather of encouraging private enterprise to produce all it could and then for the State to fill in the gaps private initiative could not cover. Prices would be controlled by giving the factory workers and government employees rations at government prices, then leaving the free peasants' market prices to fall in line. Foreign capital would be encouraged, he said, for industry was only just being developed before the war. German labour would be demanded to come and rebuild what had been destroyed.

German capital, however, was not wanted.

"I don't think the Germans will have any to invest when they have made good at all they stole. As the overwhelming majority of Germans who were in Poland before the war turned out to be spies we will not permit Germans to live in Poland henceforth."

"Our frontiers should run along the River Neisse till it joins the Oder, then along the Oder to the sea and a portion west thereof, including the city of Stettin. We desire a good frontier with Czechoslovakia but a short one with Germany. I hope the Germans which the Red Army finds in East Prussia will be taken to Russia where there is plenty for them to do, but if any remain, we shall have work for them too.

"Lvov is a hard problem for us because the majority in the city are Poles while the countryside around has an Ukrainian majority; but with mutual understanding with Russia this problem can be solved. We shall decree that Ukrainians may if they wish return to the Ukraine and as you know the Russians have already decreed that Poles in the U.S.S.R. may opt for Poland. We want to settle the frontiers once for all, not merely reduce our minorities by a million or so, but abolish minorities altogether."

Moravski had rather a tart turn of phrase, but he marshalled his facts in a business-like way. After he had finished, General Rola-Zimiersky answered questions. I had heard London Poles allege that the general was a Communist—probably purely on the ground that he supported the Republicans in Spain—but he appeared in fact to be a typical professional officer, with a Churchillian expression and a pugnacious way of giving his view. He pointed out that before many months were past Poland would have a considerable army of her own. I had seen posters on every wall, "Poles, to Arms!" and young men in thousands flocking to the colours and at the Rokossovsky parade a division with only 2 months' training marching past, looking pretty sound.

General Rola said that this division was going into the line at once. I asked him why there seemed to be so many men of military age left behind. He said the harvest was so good that the Germans had left as many peasants as possible on the land for the sake of the food supply. The new recruits had been spiritually stiffened by the frightful events in Warsaw, where the Germans were systematically destroying the city. Warsaw had been burning for three weeks, he said. A cup of water cost 500 zlotys. A third of the city had already been burned out and the Germans were killing all who did not come out of their cellars with white flags. Certainly, grief

and rage such as I never saw equalled animated all these Poles and a desire for vengeance seemed to fill every heart. General Rola suggested that the United Nations should proclaim that unless the holocaust in Warsaw ceased forthwith, Berlin should be razed to the ground as a reprisal when the Allies reached it.

He characterised General Bor, the leader of the Warsaw rising, as little better than a German agent. But this proved a hasty view for just three weeks afterwards the Lublin Committee came out with a statement which recognised the heroism of the people of Warsaw; the order to rise might have been criminal, but the people's answer to the hopeless call was splendid.

As we left the government building Polish sentries presented arms and newsreel men took shots of the first Allies to enter Poland after the liberation, while some of us were invited to speak into the microphone. How much smoother than the Russians are the Poles, whether from London or Lublin, when it comes to publicity. In freedom of comment by our hosts and in what we were able to see, this journey surpassed in value all our others—chiefly, I think, because it was planned and conducted by Poles instead of Russians.

We strolled about in the sunny streets, talking to all and sundry. When word got about the city that we were having a meal in what had been the directors' room of the leading bank, a crowd gathered outside and set up a cheer for the Allies.

The weather was glorious, with that hazy softening of distances which one never sees in Russia. The cafés were open. Citizens were promenading beneath the trees, drinking in the sunshine and the freedom. There seemed to be more Polish soldiers than Russian in the city. The behaviour of the Red Army men was good. They did not obtrude. And during the days that we spent there I neither saw nor heard of an instance of friction between Russian soldiers and Poles—a considerable feat of mutual restraint when you reflect that the arrival of the Red Army in Poland was very comparable to an invasion of Eire by a British army. Rivalry there was, of course, on an intense plane and on a political level, but it was between Pole and Pole rather than between the Poles and the liberating troops.

I formed the impression then, which grew in the months that followed, that although the Lublin Committee were neither well known to the public nor popular, they had the great advantage of being on the spot and at the helm. And the longer the emigré

Poles in London stayed away, the firmer would grow the foundation of the Lublin administration.

After all, had England been overrun in 1939 as Poland had been, and its government gone into exile in North America, what would the ordinary Englishman have thought if members of that government refused to come home when the opportunity arose, on the plea that the liberating army had not yet restored full independence and, perhaps, did not intend to do so in the future? Would not the ordinary Englishman, obliged to live on at home in any event, say to his exiled rulers: "Come 'ome anyhow, mates, and give the thing a fair trial?"

When we got back to Moscow, our minds and memories still filled with the appalling reek of Maidanek, some of us went to a film show at the American Embassy, trying to forget it all. The film turned out to be a Hollywood indictment of Nazi terrorism, in which the climax took place "in the Gestapo concentration camp at Lublin, Poland."

The film version was generally pronounced to be a very praiseworthy reconstruction.

ESTONIA

GOVAROV'S OFFENSIVE into the Baltic States in September finally convinced the Finns that the game was up and, in the middle of the month, a peace delegation under Mr. Hacksell, the then Prime Minister, arrived in Moscow. They were put up at a second-class hotel and left to cool their heels for a while—as seemed only proper in view of their own procrastinating tactics. All at once the rumour went around that Hacksell, on being shown the armistice terms, had a stroke.

He was too ill to be moved from the hotel and was being attended by two Russian specialists. Actually, however, he was in a curious state of mind when he first arrived and the stroke overtook him before the negotiations were properly begun.

When the delegation was finally invited to step over to the Kremlin Hacksell replied that they all had an engagement at the opera that night. He was reminded that Molotov and the British Ambassador would be waiting for him and he asked why the British ambassador was involved. Because Russia and Britain were two of the chief countries with whom Finland was at war, he was told.

Hacksell did not seem to comprehend this, whereupon he was reminded that Finland was not only at war with Britain but with all the dominions also. At this point the premier became quite *distrain* and shortly after he had a seizure.

Stalin was ill with influenza at this time, the result of one of his frequent, but never publicised, trips to the front. For several weeks he was not allowed to see visitors until on September 24th he received the British and American ambassadors who found him up and in his marshal's uniform, but looking very grey. When the snow and the biting winds came in October, he was found to be looking much better. Indeed, the Russian winter which so depresses the foreigner, does seem to have a bracing effect on the Russian.

Of course the fact that Stalin was ill could not be reported. Perhaps this was wise, in war-time. But when the Marshal's

daughter, Svetlana, celebrated her father's convalescence by getting married I ventured to write a short dispatch about it. This was it:

"Marshal Stalin's only daughter has been married to Grigori Marosov, a young man who was a fellow student in the so-called 'model school' No. 72 in Gorky Street, not far from the Kremlin. The bridegroom comes of a Jewish family of Moscow. Svetlana, who was hostess to Winston Churchill in the Kremlin, has been studying at the historical faculty of Moscow University. She is auburn-haired, aged 20, is good at sports and drives a car. She dresses very plainly.

"The Soviet practice is to give absolutely no publicity to personal lives, especially when they are those of leading citizens or their families, and so Miss Stalin's marriage has not been announced or published anywhere. At school 72 Miss Stalin got high marks and was popular with her fellow students because of her modest and unassuming manner. She used to go to birthday parties in the homes of her colleagues and her father's position never entered into the conduct of her own life. Miss Stalin's personal modesty recalls that of her mother, Alleluieva (in English, Hallelujah), whom Stalin married between the July and October revolutions in 1917, when he and the other Bolshevik leaders were in hiding. Alleluieva used to work in a Soviet institution, where very few people guessed her identity. Some of her working colleagues indeed only discovered that she was the wife of Stalin at the time of her death, aged 34."

This not very disturbing dispatch was referred from one authority to another by the Press Department. Knowing the rule against personal publicity, I asked them to take their time and to do their best to get the rule relaxed, inasmuch as they well knew that little items like this were front page news in the Allied press and surely did good rather than harm in inter-allied relations. I had several consultations with them and they did their best in the matter. But at the end of a week, they handed the story back, saying they were very sorry but it could not go.

I mention this incident as an instance of the extreme rigidity of Public Relations in Russia, in so far as they can be said to exist at all. The Press Department people, most of whom had been abroad, well knew that personal stories like this could build goodwill overseas, even though they would not be considered "good form" inside Russia. Yet they were not able to relax a rule that had been made to fit internal conditions even though relaxation

would benefit their foreign relations. I often used to wonder what would happen if the Soviet Government, instead of hiring foreign engineers were to engage, just on a year's contract, a really first-rate publicist from abroad of the calibre of the late Ivy Lee. There are still people in the West all-a-tremble over the subtlety of "Soviet propaganda." Yet all who have lived in Russia during this war agree that the Russians are hopelessly bad propagandists—throwing away the most superb opportunities to build goodwill for Russia abroad! An ordinary English newspaperman, put in charge of their Press Department, could get publicity results which would *really* make every Tory in the West fearful of his future, merely by removing every censorship "stop," save those on military security and permitting correspondents from the West to write everything they saw in Russia in their own way, *using the idiom* which the Western public understands. It is hard to believe that influential people in Moscow do not realise this perfectly well. Hence one is left with the supposition that, fundamentally, they do not really care what the Western world thinks of Russia.

However, when it comes to the chronicling of German atrocities, the Russians *do* understand. After Govarov, now a marshal, had broken between ten and twelve German divisions in his breakthrough between Pskov and Narva, together with 200 tanks and over 500 guns, and after the German commander General Grasser had got away in a plane, leaving his men in the lurch, I flew to Tallinn on October 1st, passing low over the domes of Leningrad and the golden beaches of the Baltic, and almost the first thing I did was to visit the German work-camp at Klooga. There I acted as coroner over another frightful Nazi massacre. This time not only the Gestapo had been the butchers, but the Todt organisation as well. Instead of cleaning everything up and burying the evidence, as the British or American authorities would have done, the Russians left the whole place exactly as they had found it until the Atrocities Commission and the Allied correspondents could reach the scene. The spectacle was an appalling one but the evidence was so conclusive that it became an important link in the chain of facts which would one day hang not only the leading Nazis but also many of the smaller gangsters who pleasurably carried out their orders.

A few miles west of Tallinn, in the midst of silent woods, the Todt organisation in September, 1943, took over some barracks, which the Red Army had built in 1940, for use as a concrete factory

and lumber plant, bringing there several thousand Jews from the Vilna Ghetto. The women had their heads shaved and the men a bald circle cut to aid recognition. All wore overalls bearing the Star of David and worked from 6 a.m. until dark on one cup of ersatz coffee for breakfast, a plate of soup for lunch and in the evening 25 grammes of margarine with coffee, plus 330 grammes of bread daily. The usual Gestapo brutalities and beatings occurred until September 19th when at 8.30 in the morning Gestapo men arrived from Tallinn in large trucks with 14 barrels of petrol, 800 Russian prisoners, both civil and military, and about 700 Estonian political prisoners. That made approximately 3000 in the camp, all told.

The Gestapo men brought mineral waters with them so that the executioners could refresh themselves. Evidently to avert a panic, the Gestapo announced that the camp would be evacuated to Germany on account of the Soviet advance. They gave breakfast and ordered lunch for the prisoners.

Then 300 of the strongest men were ordered into the forest to cut logs. They did not return. What happened after was told by the 85 prisoners who survived the massacre and corroborated by my own eyesight. The Gestapo had four oblong log piles made, forced the men to lie on them, about 60 on each, then shot them through the head.

They then placed more logs on top of the bodies and repeated the process, bringing out more prisoners in relays. They did this four to five times until they had layer upon layer of corpses. They then poured petrol over the bodies and logs and burned all.

I saw three piles burned like this. The fourth they had no time to burn. They were heaped high with bodies, some only slightly burned. Many were tensed out in agony. Naturally many of the men and women refused to be butchered in this way but made a break for it. To prevent escapes, Gestapo men were posted over a wide glade on all sides of the funeral pyres. The wretched people, some slightly wounded, were shot down as they ran.

There, on the grass sloping down to a pellucid blue lake fringed with pines, they lay now. Not a thing had been touched. Men and women lay shot in the back, slumped on their faces as they had fallen. On the green sward lay the empty soda-pop bottles swilled from, then thrown aside, by the killers. But these three pyres were only a part of the infamy.

Quarter of a mile away there was a wooden barrack which the

prisoners themselves built. Here hundreds of prisoners were locked in; petrol was poured over and then they burned to death.

I stood beside the charred remains with Jeremiah Ratner, aged 52, who had studied at Edinburgh University in 1913 and 1914, then become a forestry expert in Poland. Ratner smiled the smile of a man who had plumbed every horror and so can smile over whatever horror remains, and he said: "Funny thing, I, an old fellow survive, when my boy, who was fifteen, lies in there."

And he showed me his son's body.

With Mandel Balberizky, a chemist, bent and white-haired though only 45, and his son aged thirteen, I then inspected the worst sight of all—a concrete barrack where the Germans had locked people in, then dashed through in berserk fury shooting every one they saw. Although the building could not burn they poured petrol over the dead and wounded, and tried to set the whole on fire. I went into this disgusting German butcher's shop. The bodies of men, women and children—nearly all the men were civilians—were piled one upon another. The blood had congealed like toffee on the floor. What sounded like the whir of machinery was the buzzing of flies. Seventy bodies for identification had been placed outside on the grass. A mother lay there with an infant in her arms only a few months old. Young women and children in their teens were there. There were piles of uniforms with the swastika armband labelled "Organisation Todt," evidently stripped from the prisoners so as not to waste them.

Balberizky and his boy regarded all this quite unperturbed. They had spent three years in the Vilna Ghetto and so were hardened beyond the limits of any Commando.

"My boy learned English in the Ghetto," said the chemist conversationally, as we turned our back upon all the slaughtered innocents. "My daughter was a lovely girl but they separate women from men in the Ghetto, so I don't know if she's alive."

Then he amazed me by saying: "It's nice here."

I stared at him.

"Nice," he repeated. "It's like the best kind of *pension* now. We get good food and don't have to work, just tell the Inquiry all we know. Soon we shall all return to Vilna. They say 1500 Jews remained there and life will begin again. Once there were seventy thousand of us in Vilna."

What manner of people were they who bestially slaughtered all these prisoners before they ran away from the Red Army? Some

of the jailers were Estonian Fascists, the rest Germans, and the names of many are known. There were three S.S. women overseers in the camp. Inge Wiezemann who had lived eight years in the United States and spoke fluent English was bad, but the most cruel was Aggi Gastren from the Tyrol, who delighted in beating the women prisoners, of whom there were about 600, plus 84 children.

In the main barrack I saw a mural with a Nazi eagle in the centre; on one side a glamourised portrait of an S.S. man with a gun, on the other an equally romanticised portrait of a slave worker in Todt organisation uniform with a crusading expression on his face. Near here were the quarters of S.S. leader Schwarze, who left behind a pocket-book with his wife's address inside—Ilse Schwarze, 21 Zeppelin Strasse (ground floor), Goerlitz, Silesia. One would like to call there on going into Germany. Other brutes were Oberstuermfuehrer Hans Ausmeier, S.S. leader Brenneisen and Doctor Bottmann, who administered a fatal dose of Evipan to any one falling ill. The chief of the camp was named Bock.

Both in Vilna Ghetto and in the camp the order was: "No Jewish children must be born." Recently two babies were born. Murder was not spontaneous. Some weeks elapsed while the camp commandant awaited instructions from Berlin as to what to do with them. Finally the order came: "Liquidate," and three prisoners, Abram Aaranson, Abram Vapnik and Isaac Rottner told me they saw S.S. man Willi Bahr remove these infants, suffocate them and place the bodies in an incinerator kept for that purpose.

Lazar Olegski, a magistrate of Vilna, aged 31, told me: "Father and I were brought here a year ago. My wife and mother were taken away from us. On January 25 this year father died, aged 58, from beating and overwork. His body was burned. There was an order forbidding any relatives to recover ashes from the incinerator but after dark I went there and found what I hope are father's remains. I have them always on me," and Olegski held out to me a thing like a match-box on which he had written his father's name.

Olegski told how he and others, hearing the shooting, managed to hide in the attics of the barracks.

"I tried to get down the chimney from the roof but it was too narrow, so I lay under a pile of mattresses. We lay there without food and water for 36 hours, then two of us went scavenging on to the lower floors, found bread and a little water. We dared not go out lest the Germans were still there. Finally at 3 p.m. on

September 25, the first Russian, a sailor, arrived after we had been hiding a whole week."

Other survivors told me they escaped by shamming dead under bodies in the barracks. One wounded man actually crawled out from one of the funeral pyres and lay to one side, shamming dead until the Germans departed.

Another said: "I owe my life to German bureaucracy. They lined me up then said they had no orders to deal with me just then, so I could fall out and wait. I hid in an attic and they forgot about me."

The whole business showed how well-named was the machine bearing the imprint of the late Herr Doktor TODT and how little there was to choose between it and the S.S. and Gestapo. The 85 survivors followed us around their gehenna wherever we went. Not the least terrible aspect of Klooga was the mentality of these survivors. Only one or two of the younger and tougher men had retained any spark of ordinary human pride; the others either wallowed in timidity and self-abasement or else took a light-hearted jocular attitude towards the whole thing. Had I suffered there, I think I would have become jocular too. The whole affair was too like some Grimm fairy tale about a monstrous Ogre who lived in a wood, dragged off boys and girls by their hair, burned them till they were done nice and crisp and then ate them for his dinner . . . too like that sort of thing to seem quite real. Even though the bodies lay there before you. And for these 85, of course, the Red Army played the part of the Prince Charming who had beaten the Ogre in combat and taken them off his menu in the very nick of time. No wonder some of these people giggled and jostled each other in childish play as we walked around the funeral pyres. Others wept. But I could understand rather better how the gigglers and jostlers felt. Tears, after all, become rather irrelevant after one has spent two years in a ghetto and another year or so in an Ogre's Den. When the doors are flung open and the Oven is put out, coltish pranks may be a sign of reviving life, of the consciousness of Human Personality creeping back into minds that had thought to have lost it for ever.

German prisoners, of course, always protest that they know nothing about these butcheries and when, on our way back to Tallinn, we talked with some Estonian cottagers who lived only a few miles away and told them what we had seen, they only half-believed us. I believe that one of the Allies' most immediate tasks

will be to show the German people pictures and films of the bestialities that have been committed in their name. No doubt millions of Germans honestly regard themselves as quite guiltless, for not even in Germany was the terror of the concentration camp a subject of polite conversation. Only visual evidence of why the name of German stinks from one end of Europe to the other will bring the German people to a proper frame of mind to absorb the re-education of which they so desperately stand in need.

Back in Tallinn; of which only a part of the mediæval town had been destroyed by Russian bombing, the most striking thing to be seen was the breaking out of the Red Fleet into the Baltic. The liberation of the island of Dago and the arrival of a Soviet commission to mark out the boundaries of the new naval base at Porkalla-Udd, just 40 miles north of Tallinn across the Gulf of Finland marked the start, in Russian eyes, not merely of a new phase of the war but of a fresh turn in Russian history. It was not just that Zhdanov, the symbol of Leningrad's resistance in the siege, was in Finland as a conqueror. Vasvelod Vishnevsky, a leading figure in the Leningrad Party as well as being a playwright and a captain in the Baltic Fleet, had just arrived in Tallinn and he said: "This is the culmination of a struggle for the Baltic between Germany and Russia which has endured for 700 years."

Tallinn and not Leningrad, he said, would henceforth be the main base of the Baltic Fleet and this time the Russians had taken Tallinn never to give it up again.

"Imagine how our Admiral Tribits must feel when he arrives here to-day," added Vishnevsky. "He fought here in 1918 as a simple matelot. He returns as admiral of the fleet. Under the Versailles Treaty an attempt was made to draw a *cordon sanitaire* around Russia and push us back into the forests. This was an error and our allies Britain and America, who realise that now, are helping us build a new world in which the Baltic States, among others, won't be interventionist but will be part of a system that is dedicated to peace. For 27 years we had to put up with an impossible situation—spies in Finland and Estonia able to watch every movement of our Baltic Fleet and guns trained on us from the very outskirts of Leningrad. Britain or America wouldn't stand for hostile guns facing them only 30 miles from London or New York. We of the Baltic Fleet are proud to get our old bases back after so long."

Vishnevsky said the Baltic Fleet had been in Tallinn on the very first night of the war. They were "stabbed in the back" by Mannerheim and after that had to fight for their very existence in the Baltic. The warships were completely hemmed in but, though the ships could not put to sea, the sailors fought on shore.

"All through 1942 in Leningrad we fought real hunger. I myself collapsed twice from starvation. In September, '41, when the Germans broke through into the Leningrad suburbs, Marshal Voroshilov himself rushed into battle with our sailors. Do you think we can forget all that? We have won back our own and never more will the Baltic be a German lake."

In 1939, under the pact with Germany, the Russians won their lost bases back. But sensing they might have to fight for them soon, they were in too much of a hurry to Sovietise institutions and individuals. This made no difference to the military fate of the Baltic republics but it was to cause them a lot of unnecessary difficulty now that they had returned for the second time. Something like 30,000 Estonians of the upper and middle classes had emigrated to Finland and Sweden. A smaller number had chosen to depart with the Germans. They had undergone an over-rapid Sovietisation between 1939 and 1941; the rate of change had been much swifter than in the R.S.F.S.R. itself, and the war had come before the resultant benefits had become apparent to any one except the Estonian peasant. These people fled because they feared the same thing was going to happen again. But this time, meaning to make Estonia a lasting and willing partner in the Soviet federation, the Russians had learned a lesson and were pursuing an entirely different policy. Just what that policy was became clear when we climbed the hill to the mediæval castle which towers above the town.

The red flag was floating from the battlements and in the council hall sat an enormous man of 41, strangely like the pictures we have of Oscar Wilde. This was the prime minister of the Estonian Socialist Republic, Arnold Veimer, who had spent 14 years in prison as a Communist under the "bourgeois republic" and succeeded the former premier, Lauristen, who was killed by a German bomb when evacuating from Tallinn by sea in 1941. He had a beautiful speaking voice but as he spoke only Estonian his remarks had to be translated first into Russian, then into English.

"The Soviet Republic of Estonia," he began, "will permit small

private trade and does not intend to collectivise agriculture until the peasants themselves show a desire for it."

And I gathered the same policy would be pursued in Latvia and Lithuania.

"No shop or plant employing 10 workers or less will be nationalised," Veimer continued. "All above that size *will* be. In 1940 land holdings above 30 hectares (about 74 acres) were confiscated from about 10 per cent of the peasants and 50 per cent of the peasants then got land for the first time, or received more land than they had held before. On these small holdings the peasants may now employ as much hired help as they choose and own as much cattle as they can afford." (In the Russian republics members of collectives are not allowed to own more than a certain number of domestic stock.) Small enterprises will definitely remain in private hands but large ones, and especially those which were owned by Germans, will belong to the community. We shall point out in the Press the advantages of collectivising the land, but there will be no moves in that direction for the time being. Our country's first land reform in 1919-20 abolished large estates, most of which were German. The second reform by the Soviet in 1940 limited holdings to 30 hectares. When the Germans came in 1941 they abolished both reforms, returning some of the land to German owners and the rest to the peasantry. Our farmers take well to co-operatives and these will be encouraged."

The premier said that though Tallinn seemed fairly normal on the surface, grave damage had been done. About 40 per cent of the houses were badly damaged, the port was completely smashed, and it would take 2 years to restore both port and city. Only half the city's pre-war population of 140,000 remained. The cattle population of the republic had dropped 50 per cent. Two-thirds of the pigs had been killed by the Germans. When someone asked about "emigrés" Veimer smiled and said, "Estonia has her Quislings, like other lands. We have the unfortunate distinction of having given birth to Alfred Rosenberg. Hjalmar Mja, who was of German origin, was permitted by us to go to Germany in 1940. There he was groomed as the chief German quisling and came back with them the following year."

I asked the premier if he desired to maintain the free flow of trade from Estonian ports to the West or whether the economy of the country would be re-gearred into that of the rest of the U.S.S.R. He answered:

"We Estonians are very businesslike, just like you English. Some people have put their money on the wrong horse. If the prices of 1928 are paid, we shall gladly trade with the West, but if those of 1932 are offered, we shall not. Part of our merchant marine was got out of the Baltic before 1941 and is plying between the United States and Vladivostock, a part is based on Archangel. But I hope our ships will soon be sailing through the Kiel Canal again. We already have our own foreign office and war office, like the other Soviet republics."

An Estonian Corps under Lieut.-General Perm was fighting under Govarov in the present campaign. It had fought with the Red Army at Novo-Sokolniki and Veliki-Luiki and had already incorporated some soldiers of the old Estonian Army who had been pressed into the German Army, but had surrendered to their Red brethren at Tartu. Nearly all these men had been professional soldiers under the "bourgeois" republic, and I soon found out that the Estonian branch of the Red Army was regarded as a good career for former middle-class people who had lost the property which had given them an "unearned income."

Walking down the hill away from the castle we saw little knots of Germans being rounded up in the streets and there were said to be thousands of soldiers still hiding in the woods nearby. Across the main street, called PIKK, was draped a scarlet banner bearing the words, "Long live the fighting alliance of the U.S.S.R., Britannia and America!" The famous mediæval hostelry, The Golden Lion, had been levelled by a Russian bomb which killed 50 German officers who had been enjoying a regimental dinner at the time. But the little Palace Hotel where we stayed was quite unharmed. The electricity worked and there was boiling water in the tiled bathrooms. The hotel possessed that sort of chemist's shop cleanliness you find in modern German buildings and indeed, though the Estonians like to feel themselves Scandinavian, I found the atmosphere of the old town and of the new streets alike much more Germanic than anything else. On the outskirts there were red-roofed villas around the shores of a lake; coffee-shops and pastry-cooks were still open. Everything was as neat as a dolls' house. Nothing could have been less like the sprawling untidiness of Russia. The new government seemed to be quite right in developing this particular Soviet republic on its own lines. This view was confirmed by one of the peasant leaders, Jan Pyder, who met us at the hotel. Of course he had been produced by the Russians

as a "typical peasant" and everything he said was "propaganda." None the less, it made sense and did not fly in the face of the obvious facts.

Pyder said there had been very few traitors among the peasants. Why? Take his own case. He had 4 hectares originally. The Soviets gave him 8 hectares more in 1940. The Germans took these 8 away, leaving him with only 4.

"Collectivise?" he asked. "No, I think most peasants will say the time is not ripe. First we must examine the whole thing very carefully. Here you see we have individual homesteads, not large villages as in Russia. The Germans manipulated our own co-operatives to collect food. They requisitioned 45 kilos of butter per cow per year which was more than most cows could produce. They demanded 42 poods of rye per hectare when the average yield was about 90 poods. They demanded 70 eggs per hen per year: the average hen produced 110 to 120 a year. If you had no eggs, you had to buy them. They demanded 30 kilos of meat from each pig. To kill an ox you needed a permit and you had to give the Germans one-third of the meat and divide the hide in two. Under the Soviets we had obligatory deliveries of grain but the quantity was not large and we could sell the balance on the market, though since the State price was higher than the market price, we usually marketed the rest with the government. Under the Germans the peasant's life was really hard. The Soviets gave us land and we had money for commodities—I bought this suit under the Soviets" . . . and he indicated proudly the blue serge with the linen shirt and blue tie he was wearing.

"It's significant," he went on, "that the partisans operated in the country, where the peasants helped them. They stayed out of the towns where one met quislings, mostly among the small shop-keeping class."

I met one of the partisans, who had ventured into the city only now that the Germans had gone. He was a handsome lad with auburn hair, brown eyes and a vibrant bass voice, who was only seventeen when he did his first guerrilla job, in 1941. His name was Pereverzev and he was very frank.

"I had a troop of seven men under me," he said. "Our first task, to blow up a railway station, we bungled. We weren't traitors. But we just weren't very brave. I was wounded and had to hide with a peasant's family for 6 months."

When he was fit again, he contacted the Red Army who dropped

him a radio set by parachute. For the next 3 years he sent out military intelligence over this radio without being caught. Now his chief worry is his lack of education, after spending so long underground, with a price on his head.

"I hope the Soviet power will give me a chance to learn," he says. "I am very backward with books. I have much time to make up."

The Russian staff officer who was with us said, "All right, my boy, you won't have to fight any more. You can go to school."

But what kind of schooling would be appropriate to the defeated enemy was not immediately apparent. I went to an apartment house where German officers were being interrogated. Major Apfell, a wizened customer of 47 who had been a magistrate in civil life proclaimed that he, a veteran of the last war, was deeply shocked at the attempt on the life of the Fuehrer.

"After fighting for 9 years on other people's territory, do you find it was all worth while?" he was asked.

"The last war was not, but as to this one, we are not in a position to appraise it as yet," he replied with a judicial air. "My government orders and I obey. As a junior person, I do not consider myself entitled to an opinion about high policy."

Lieutenant Anton Raczek, aged 42, a Nazi Party man born at Allenstein, East Prussia, and looking it, fingered his Iron Cross and expressed the opinion that England and France had started the war.

"As a Nazi, how do you account for the fact that an alliance of Communists, decadent Democrats and Jews is thrashing the German Army?" he was asked.

"When the hare has many enemies, that's the end of the hare, as the old German proverb says," he mumbled.

A scared little rabbit anxious to please was Ferdy Schmidtseder, an Austrian corporal who said of that other Austrian corporal: "I'm real sorry they didn't bump that man off when they tried. I've not the slightest hope that Germany will win. I ran like the devil and I was very glad to surrender."

We spent two or three days in Tallinn, with plenty of leisure to wander about and talk to people at random. In a shopkeeper's family, you nearly always got the same reaction—fear of Sovietisation, a slight hankering after the Germans and a harking back to the "good old days" when the town had been full of English merchants.

I spoke to two smartly dressed girls who were promenading along PIKK. Their idea of perfection was English clothes and American movies and what chance was there, they asked, that they would get either under a Soviet régime? They soon established their interest as ladies of easy virtue, on a strictly amateur rating.

There were a lot of ersatz but smart German clothes and nick-knacks about. The people who wore them bewailed their fate—"Over-run twice over, with all our wealth destroyed and our best men away from home," these women said. It seemed to be a sore point against the Russians that the Estonian soldiers had nearly all married Russian girls during their period in the U.S.S.R. I had to point out that, compared with Leningrad, the real wealth of Tallinn was quite unimpaired and if they thought their fate a hard one they should see how people were living in Russia.

"Ah, the *Russians*! . . ." they said, dismissing 190 million people as Occidentals used once to dismiss 400 millions of Chinese.

I could not generate a great deal of concern over the "sufferings," past or prospective, of these good burghers of Tallinn. They all looked well-fed, well-dressed and well-housed. Under a Soviet there seemed little doubt that the peasantry would get more land and live better; the small bourgeoisie would keep their shops while the big burghers in many cases would continue at their own factories on a salaried basis, though they no longer owned them.

All these people were beginning a new Soviet life with the inestimable advantage of starting from a higher level of industrial development than the Russians themselves had begun with. The factories were there, waiting to produce. The Estonians would not have to cut their standard of living to the bone in order to industrialise themselves in 5 years. It seemed indeed probable that the three Baltic republics for some years to come would be ahead of the rest of the Soviet Union in housing and the creature comforts.

"THE OLD MAN" AND "UNCLE JOE"

October 9, 1944.—Churchill arrived in Moscow at 11.45 this morning.

Although there had been faint preliminary tremors, no one knew for certain that he was here until the afternoon. We had all guessed that something was in the wind ever since the British Ambassador had postponed a holiday in England a few weeks earlier. I had plumped for another meeting in Teheran and had sent my paper a cable suggesting that I get down there right away, before travel was restricted, and wait for the Big Three to arrive. Fortunately they did not fall in with this suggestion.

Five big British planes brought the P.M. and a party of nearly 50, including 20 girl secretaries.

Churchill had with him Anthony Eden, the C.I.G.S. Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, Sir Hastings Ismay and Major-General Ian Jacob, the military secretary to the War Cabinet. I went to see General Jacob as soon as he had settled in at the Embassy, as he is my cousin—an accident which gave some of my newspaper colleagues a severe case of what are known in the profession as the "jitters"—but needless to say I obtained no advantage thereby. The conversation, far removed from matters of state, dwelt on the plane of what had become of Uncle This and whether Auntie That was still alive. It was, however, obvious that the military were not going to be busy for a day or two; political questions were uppermost, particularly that of Poland, and the armistice terms to be given Bulgaria and the co-ordination of British and Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia, Greece and Hungary were other points to be discussed. So while Churchill was having his first talk in the Kremlin with Stalin, my wife, my cousin and Colonel Boyle, another of the Prime Minister's staff, went off to a concert at Tchaikovsky Hall and then to supper at the Moskva Hotel. General Jacob had been in Moscow on Churchill's first visit 2 years earlier, but he had never seen any of the city's normal aspects—very few public places had been open then—and though the concert was a poor one the magnificent white, egg-shaped concert-hall, the

Mongol man and wife who sat next to us in the front row, the bottle of Russian beer in the interval—all these small things had their value because on your first night in Moscow everything assumes a strange and rare quality. The Soviet Union is different from any other country: both for better and for worse. The beer had been brewed in the "Red Bavaria" factory in Leningrad, which had gone on brewing all through the siege. "Red Bavaria," indeed! The undoing of which had been Adolf Hitler's first job as a police spy . . . no Russian need hesitate for a toast when quaffing *this* brew.

The Churchillians wanted to travel from concert to hotel in the Metro but there followed us around everywhere a car whose chauffeur cried, "Please get in—I have orders to take the officers wherever they want to go."

October 11, 1944.—To-day I saw Stalin for the first time. It was in fact the first time that any correspondent had seen him, except from a great distance at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet, since the beginning of the war. Some of us thought we might see him at the reception which Molotov gave to enable Churchill to meet the diplomatic corps this afternoon. The Narkomindel, in its own inimitable way, began ringing us up at 5.20 p.m. to announce: "You are invited to a reception at Mr. Molotov's which begins at 5 o'clock." Some correspondents were only summoned at five minutes to six. None of us had any transport so we all rushed there by tram or Underground. But Stalin was not there. The *venue* was the Foreign Office guest-house in Spiridonovka Street where Molotov gives his annual receptions. Although this was supposed to be a cocktail party, the tables were lavishly spread as for a "Chai" and most of the usual faces were bent over the usual trough. Churchill and Eden, who were segregated from the bulk of the guests in a separate room, did not stay long. Small wonder—they cannot have met any one worth talking to in there. Writers like Ehrenbourg and Tolstoi and actresses of the Moscow Arts Theatre like Tarasova or ballerinas like Lepechinskaya were all mingling with the crowd.

At 8.30 that night Crosthwaite, the first secretary of our embassy, telephoned to say that if one of us could get up there before 9 p.m. he would be in time to see Stalin arrive at the Embassy and get a story which he could pass on to all his colleagues. Again, no transport: so I set out on foot, running across the Red Square and over the bridge across the Moskva. I had small hope

of being in time for I supposed that the embankment leading to the Embassy would be cordoned off by the militia. This was the first time that Stalin had ever been to the embassy of a foreign power in Russia so, I thought, the "security" would be tremendous. But as I jogged along the embankment I was surprised to see how few people were about. The evening was crisp: the sky studded with stars. In the humble shops along the quayside old women were buying bread. Two or three cars were halted near the Embassy and a few plain clothes men were leaning in neighbouring doorways. At the Embassy gate four militia men were standing. But there were no soldiers and nothing to indicate to passers-by that Stalin and Churchill were about to have dinner together in the ugly grey and yellow Victorian Embassy which faced directly on to the Kremlin, across the river. The big electric flambeaux at the Embassy gates were illuminated, casting a flood of light across the water.

I walked straight in. I must have looked a somewhat suspicious figure in my dirty old trench-coat. But nobody stopped me. In the hall I found the Ambassador checking over the attire of his minister, "Jock" Balfour, who normally puts comfort ahead of sartorial splendour. The Ambassador was evidently worried lest Balfour had donned a favourite woollen sweater under his dark-blue suit and was having a good look to see that this solecism had not been committed. It was to be an informal dinner, for men only, and except for those in uniform, all the guests wore lounge-suits.

A little knot of Embassy secretaries were peering through the doorways in the hope of catching a glimpse of Stalin. Just inside the door, where I took up my station, there stood a Soviet naval officer with a miniature camera. He was to take pictures for T.A.S.S. (unhappily none of them were successful). Comrade Pavlov, Stalin's interpreter, stood waiting in the hall with his opposite number, Arthur Birse, who always interprets for Churchill in Moscow.

The Ambassador told me that his Greek cook Timoleon had produced roast turkey and sucking-pig for the occasion. This was the first time since the war that Timoleon had had a chance to show what he could do. The Embassy had been hit by a bomb intended for the Kremlin and had not been used the greater part of the war: its kitchens were not at their best, and, of course, rationing had been so tight all the time that it had never been possible to give a really first-class dinner before. But this one *was*

first-class. "Not quite a Kremlin banquet, perhaps," said Clark-Kerr, "but we've done our best and I think it's going to take us a good couple of hours to get through."

The American Ambassador arrived just before nine, followed by a flurry of Soviet assistant-commissars—Vishinsky, Lozovsky with his auburn beard looking as though it were fresh from the beauty parlour, Dekanosov, Litvinov and Maisky. They fairly tore into the building, fearful of arriving after Stalin himself.

The chimes of the Kremlin striking nine carried clearly across the water. Then there was a pause. I had a good look around. At the foot of the stairs there stood two officers of the Home Security Troops (N.K.V.D.), extremely smart in blue caps, with red and gold braid at neck and cuff, wearing white gloves and highly-polished boots with a small revolver in their holsters. One was a major, the other a colonel. At the head of the stairs two more white-gloved officers stood, with two more in the dining-room itself. They were more of a guard-of-honour than a security factor, although they could certainly have dealt with an emergency had one arisen. Three generals of Home Security stood in the hall itself. Churchill's English detective, who stood by, was a little shocked by this.

"Fancy having foreign troops in a British Embassy—its English soil, after all, isn't it?" he said.

I said we had no troops of our own for the occasion, unless we had turned out the officers of the Military Mission who, after all, weren't experienced in dealing with potential assassins.

"Still," said the detective, shaking his head, "it doesn't seem right. We wouldn't do this for any one else except Joe."

The Australian Minister, Mr. Moloney, came in, smoking a cigar and still in a jovial mood from Molotov's party. The Canadian Ambassador was with him.

At 9.06 Churchill arrived with Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke. Churchill wore a colonel's uniform of gabardine, with gabardine cap—the sort of thing they wear in Cairo. It was in effect the dress of a Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, which carries with it an honorary colonelcy of the Sussex Regiment. His detective told me that he takes this exotic dress along because it looks smart at night but at the same time can be worn by day.

Churchill went upstairs, leaving Clark-Kerr, who was the host, to receive Stalin. Three minutes later a large black Packard with very thick windows drew up, preceded by a smaller saloon. Out

of it stepped Marshal Stalin, followed by Molotov and General Antonov.

Stalin walked through the glass doors, paused on the threshold and saluted. He wore a grey topcoat with scarlet facings and the red-banded cap of a marshal. Molotov wore the grey uniform of the Foreign Office, with its silver epaulettes.

Stalin removed his cap. And then an odd thing happened. It had seemed to me that the arrangements for receiving him were none too clear. The Ambassador stood in the inner hall, surrounded by a number of secretaries. The photographer and I stood alone in the outer hall. Behind my head was a row of hat-pegs. Not unnaturally, Stalin concluded that he should hang his coat here. He weighed his cap in his hand. I met his eye and I could see that he was about to hand me his hat. Had I been the slick reporter of the movies, I would have taken it from him (then whipped off the badge as a souvenir?). But alas, being more an Englishman than a reporter, when it came to fundamentals or the making of snap decisions, I tried to look as much as possible a part of the furniture and at that moment the people in the inner hall, seeing Stalin's momentary hesitation, rushed forward and waved him into the inner chamber. There he shook hands with Clark-Kerr who murmured a welcome in Russian, and his coat was taken from him.

In the next few moments I had the chance to observe him closely. Stalin looks older and greyer than in his picture—a good deal older than Churchill. Stalin's gait is that of an elderly man. There is the slight pliancy of the knees that comes with age. He has none of the buoyancy of Churchill. But then he has had a much harder life. His features are not so large as they are depicted: his nose and mouth are more finely chiselled than in the pictures, and his head is smaller. His moustache is grey and rather drooping. His stature is below medium height. He moves slowly and easily, as one accustomed to making public appearances. He holds himself very erect and his manner is very dignified. The cast of countenance is dark and, as you would expect, a trifle Oriental. Stalin has all his hair and has obviously been handsome as a young man. The features are impassive, the skin is olive. The face has a look of extreme self-possession—the inner quietness of a man who is completely sure of himself. You have the impression that nothing that could ever happen in this world would ever take Stalin by surprise. But the eyes are extraordinarily lively, and rather merry.

In bearing and accoutrement, Stalin at that moment might

easily have been the Czar of all the Russias—except that no Czar save perhaps Peter the Great ever approached him in mental capacity. His marshal's uniform was champagne in colour with a broad red stripe down the trousers. He wore the gold star of Hero of Socialist Labour and the ribbons of his decorations. But not the diamond star of a marshal nor yet the magnificent Order of Victory in diamonds, rubies and platinum which he alone held at that moment.

With his interpreter close behind him, Stalin moved up the stairs with the Ambassador. As he passed the N.K.V.D. officers stiffened into salutes. At the head of the stairs Churchill waited to receive him.

There were nearly 30 guests assembled in the candle-lit dining-room. The Embassy is a dull Victorian structure which, like most mansions in Moscow, once belonged to a rich merchant, and it does not compare for splendour with the original British Embassy in Leningrad.

After Stalin had gone upstairs, I noticed that over an arm-chair had been folded the grey topcoat and marshal's cap of Stalin with the British warm and gabardine cap of Churchill. The chair stood all by itself, looking beautifully important in a corner of the hall.

The dinner lasted until midnight. A short while after it began the loudspeakers in the street began announcing a Moscow Salute. The curtains were drawn aside and Churchill went out on to the balcony with Stalin to see for the first time the domes and towers of the Kremlin illuminated by the gun flashes from every corner of the city and the blue and yellow and red rockets shooting into the sky.

At midnight the doors were thrown open into the white and gold drawing-room where a few other guests were waiting for a reception. Churchill shook hands with all present while Stalin bowed, raised his glass and proposed the health of all the guests. Then Churchill, Stalin, Molotov, Clark-Kerr and Harriman withdrew into the small scarlet drawing-room. A general of the N.K.V.D. closed the doors after them and there they remained for the next four hours, deep in conversation. It was after 4 o'clock in the morning when Stalin came out and drove the short distance across the bridge to his flat in the Kremlin. So ended this historical night's entertainment, after seven hours.

While the talks were going on I went to the Foreign Office where I summoned a little press conference of my own, to tell all

the other correspondents what I had seen. That any one should have thought it worthwhile to hear from me, at second hand, what had occurred that night in the Embassy may seem odd to the lay mind, but such is the public interest about everything to do with Stalin (due chiefly to the Russian policy of permitting no personal publicity at all about their leaders) that scarcely a correspondent in all Moscow failed to turn up, despite the late hour.

Three nights later he appeared with Churchill in the old Imperial Box in the Bolshoi Theatre, for a special performance, and every one was able to have their full of observing him. One American agency cabled no fewer than 2000 words on that event alone. When Iris and I reached our box, three away from Stalin's in the grand circle, we found two plain clothes men sitting there: all over the almost empty theatre men in lounge-suits were standing about. Stalin had not appeared at such close range to the public for several years—not, I think, since the murder of Kirov which was the start of the big purges—and the fact that Eden and Churchill were there also made the police doubly cautious. We were within easy grenade-tossing range of Stalin and the fact that on such an occasion there *can* be no such thing as real security was demonstrated by a woman I know who succeeded in getting into the theatre uninvited by just telling the attendant that someone had her ticket upstairs. She carried a handbag in which quite a lethal object might have been concealed. So one could not really wonder at the precautions.

When in the interval John Hersey, the *Life* correspondent, set fire to his box of matches as he lit my cigarette, one's first instinct was to duck and wait for the stream of tommy-gun slugs to be over! The matchbox went up in a "Whooph" of flame. And as it lay on the parquet another American wag bent over it, observing in a loud voice: "Just listen for the ticking sound!" Personally, I found this fooling a little too near the nub of reality to be entirely satisfactory. . . .

The cheering which swept through the theatre when Stalin and Churchill stood together in the front of the box lasted for over four minutes, and had the ring of spontaneity. It was no parliamentary "cheer" but a full-throated roaring "Hurrah." Stalin had been seen so rarely since the war and the people of Moscow had been so starved for any kind of an occasion for display that to-night real excitement could be felt. Stalin had become so much a living legend in Russia that these cheers were more than a tribute to a

chief of state. If by some miracle you could imagine George Washington appearing before a modern American audience—that would approximate to the scene we saw in the Bolshoi. Stalin is a “Founding Father” of the republic, the living link with Lenin and the first days of the revolution, and his roots go almost deeper into the pre-revolutionary fighting period because Stalin was never an emigré but spent all his years of exile in Russia. So that for most of the Russians present it was like a flash-back into history itself when the lights went up and the famous rocklike profile was revealed against the crimson curtains. Previously the applause for Churchill had been warm. But it must be confessed that in Russian eyes, there was only one man in that box after Stalin entered it. The two leaders could bring the ovation to an end only by shaking hands, then withdrawing into the ante-room behind.

To a party at James Aldridge’s where we meet the Prime Minister’s pilots. Most of the two crews who fly him regularly have done at least 60 raids over Germany and are suitably garlanded with decorations. I could not help thinking of Rex Warner’s book, *The Aerodrome*, as I talked to them and wondering—“What on earth are we going to find for these fellows to do after the war?”

They were full of amusing, harmless anecdotes about “The Old Man”—about his habit of wandering around the aircraft in flight in his underclothes, wearing a pair of bedroom slippers with a “W” embroidered on one foot and a “C” on the other, about his fondness for taking over the controls. On a recent flight in the Mediterranean, when they had a large escort of fighters flying in formation, Churchill had suddenly said: “This is dull—let’s go down 1000 feet,” and he put the nose down. The whole escort followed suit. Then he put her nose up again. The escort obediently swooped up another 1000 feet behind him. This switchback course went on for quite a while and afterwards the Premier’s pilot had to put up with a lot of cracks from the pilots of the fighters, who swore that he had been flying the big machine himself.

The flight engineer was interesting about our present unpreparedness for civil aviation after the war. On more than one trip to America he had had a good opportunity to see the plans the Americans were making. In Washington an airline official had told him: “You British are a maritime nation—we Americans will live in the air.”

And this fellow seemed to be quite accurate, for we are so far

behind the Americans in civil air matters that ten years will scarcely suffice for us to catch up.

Beautiful war planes—the Spitfire, the Mosquito, the Lancaster—that was our contribution, plus the introduction of jet propulsion: America's military types were in many instances inferior to ours, but her much larger production capacity had enabled her to build up civil types even during the war, which we had not the capacity to do, and she now had thousands of splendid passenger planes, carrying far more freight than ours over longer distances. We were trying to convert bombers to compete with the new giant Douglasses and Lockheeds—a hopeless proposition. Our best hope, he thought, was that the Americans would be generous enough to sell us their machines.

October 15, 1944.—Both the London Poles and the Lublin Poles are going full blast—the former in the Metropole Hotel and the latter, “recognised” by the Russians, occupying the Polish Embassy. I must say I find some of these London Poles very hard to take: they have a sound case, as have the Lublin Poles, but I swear these London Poles do more to queer their own pitch than the others, especially by their social gossip about “dear Marina,” when they mean the Duchess of Kent (they forget we English like our Royal Family underdone on the political side.) A minor official of the London party, returning from one of the innumerable parties which spring up in the *coulisses* of these conferences, was unwise enough to say to a journalist: “Your Mr. Churchill used some very coarse expressions at the last talk,” from which one might assume that the British were telling their protégés in London not to dally indefinitely, but make up their minds. Undoubtedly Stalin and Churchill have talked more about Poland so far than about all the other subjects put together.

Harriman, the American Ambassador, laid himself wide open too when he told an American journalist that there were not really many points at issue, considering the widely divergent viewpoints between “a Russian revolutionary and an elderly English Tory.” He was quite right, of course, but what about the divergence between the same revolutionary and a multi-millionaire's son who was at this conference as America's “observer” thanks to the accident of being able to subscribe heavily enough to the Party funds to rate an Ambassadorship (after the bad old American custom, now obsolescent)? Harriman is a good man who leans

over backwards in his efforts to be fair to the Russians: but sometimes one gets a little weary of his line of "Dives, the earnest young Marxist."

But on the whole this conference seems to be proceeding with less acrimony than most, especially when you consider that as most of the talks take place in the early hours after one or other of the enormous banquets which the Russians think it proper to serve, and which we in our turn imitate, the leading parties must be hard put to it to discuss the fate of the world without getting into an advanced stage of intoxication beforehand. Thirty or forty toasts at a Russian banquet, drunk without heeltaps, are quite in the usual run of business.

One glorious aspect of the conference is the easy flow of mail from home. Every day a Mosquito lands in Moscow, direct from England, carrying that day's national papers, dispatches for the P.M. and "bags," containing mail, for the rest of us. Yesterday's Mosquito took just 4 hours and 40 minutes between London and Moscow.

I believe this is the most intimate conference Stalin has ever had with a foreigner. They call each other "Marshal Stalin" and "Gospodin Churchill," but in some of these late night conversations they have gone far beneath the surface, discussing such ticklish subjects as the basis of popular rule, to what extent the majority should temper its rule for the sake of the minority, and each has answered questions the other put about conditions in his own country. That this is possible is due to the expert work of Stalin's interpreter Pavlov and Churchill's Major Birse. The staff on our side call Churchill "the Old Man," while Stalin and Molotov are "Uncle" and "Auntie" respectively. (Molotov's pince-nez must be the only maidenly item about this extremely hardboiled statesman.)

October 17.—To lunch with Alexander Werth to meet Oliver Harvey, the permanent under-secretary of State and Mr. Dixon, Eden's secretary. Alec laid on a good meal in his hotel room but the elderly Metropole waiter whom we call "Suvorov" was in an absent-minded mood and brought in the soup a full hour after the *hors d'ouevres* and we just got to the coffee before the guests had to rush off to their next conference. They took the delay quite in their stride, as one does after a lifetime of hearing . . . "Oh, Time means nothing to a Russian" . . . The conversation took that course which is inevitable as between journalists who don't want to seem inquisitive and diplomats who dislike to appear churlishly "close":

both sides talked feverishly about the weather and at any moment one expected to be asked if One Had Read Any Good Books Lately?

The only way one could find out anything about the British was by talking to the Poles (London): the only clue to the Russian line came from the Poles (Lublin): and if one wanted to discover what the respective Poles thought it was pretty safe to listen to the allegations of one side against the other, then believe just the opposite. Late in the conference one Man in the Know observed: "Any other negotiators would have agreed long ago but these folk are not negotiators—they are Poles."

October 18, 1944.—At the close of their visit, Churchill and Eden received us this evening at the Embassy. It was just getting dark. In the Ambassador's study, with its walls lined with red damask and its air of ruredecanal ease, *circa* 1860, the only illumination came from the logs piled on the open hearth. The dozen Soviet correspondents present looked with some astonishment upon the royal portraits in their huge gilt frames—Queen Victoria's plump hands clasped on her lap, the languorous pose of Queen Alexandria. Russian standards in painting are low enough, but this group of royalties was of a banality to surpass anything in the Tretiakov Gallery.

Presently Churchill trotted in, with Eden following him. He was wearing a black coat, sponge-bag trousers and Lord Randolph's big gold watch-chain, and he looked very tired indeed. He sat by the fire, his shoulders hunched up, and drew on his cigar a while before he spoke. He seemed dispirited. To look at him, you would not suppose his visit had been a success. His words came very slowly, the sentences hung in the air and once or twice you feared he would lose the thread altogether; but always the pendulous phrases rescued themselves, as it were, at the last moment, and when you read through what had been so haltingly delivered you saw that the texture was tight after all, the Gibbon-like polish unscratched. But, one thought with a sense of shock, this is not at all the Winston one had in the mind, but an old, bent man! The pliancy seemed to have gone out of him; the stories one had heard about his looking forward to winning the next election for the Tory Party and continuing as Prime Minister after the defeat of Germany suddenly seemed unplausible. Surely the old boy could not seriously suppose that he would be fit for it? They say he is now touchy about his health—not without reason—and is always getting Lord Moran, the doctor who goes everywhere with him,

to feel his pulse. One of his pilots told me that, on the way to Moscow, when he stepped back into the cabin for a rest a large paw was thrust out of the P.M.'s bunk and the Old Man's voice said: "Just count the pulse, will you?" The pilot didn't know how you counted the beats, so he just held the Prime Minister's hand for a while, then dropped it and said, "Very good, sir." Stalin, whom I had thought older than Churchill, now appeared relatively sprightly. Churchill has the sprinter's temperament: Stalin is the steady miler.

Perhaps it is a good thing that the press conference is not in England, as it is in America, the normal channel of contact between government leaders and the public. The set piece delivered to the parliamentary audience undoubtedly shows one off to better advantage. The shrewd eye of the journalist, looking at a Prime Minister across a drawing-room, is apt to see too much: at the press conference the protective colouring of oratory is withdrawn and the personality appears, relatively naked. And politicians, as a class, don't strip well. So to-day Churchill and Eden seemed to stand very much in the relationship of schoolmaster and pupil. When Churchill said the Foreign Secretary had done most of the work, Eden laughed in the manner of which the cartoonist Low has made such destructive use.

"Ho-ho, ho-ho—not a bit!" ejaculated Eden. And he sounded so like the sixth form boy who says, "Oh, I *say*, sir . . . *really*, you know . . . you do a jolly sight more yourself, sir!" that it was quite laughable.

Churchill was speaking "off the record," but he gave us to understand that progress had been made towards settlement of the Polish problem—the gap between the London Poles and the Lublin Poles had been narrowed and negotiations would go on. Russia and Britain had agreed on a joint policy towards Greece and Yugoslavia, had put the finishing touches to the armistice for Bulgaria. There had been a full exchange of views between the military staffs and plans made which, he was sure, we would prefer the enemy to learn of for the first time in the field. Churchill was pleased to see that Russia had lost the painful feeling that she was bearing the main burden of the war, and he was gratified by Stalin's words which showed that Russia fully appreciated all the Allies had done in recent months. Then there were some Churchillian phrases about the grim prospects for the German through the winter of 1944—"the frightful deluge of fire descend-

ing upon his cities from the air"—and some references to his own early days as a war correspondent and his recognition of the difficulties under which we laboured—"always the censor's blue pencil before you, or here perhaps it is a red pencil?" But all in all we got the impression that the Polish business was still in a very difficult stage and that if this was the main purpose of the visit, then it could not be said to have been a success.

In this, it turned out, we were wrong. The Polish problem had virtually been settled to the satisfaction of every one, that is to say, except the anti-Russian group in London of old Pilsudski-ites and semi-fascists, but this could not be said at that moment because Mikolajek was going back to London and wanted to tell his own people what the Allied offer was in his own words.

That night, after we had seen Churchill, Mikolajek saw Stalin again and came out of the Kremlin looking very pleased. At that moment I believe the proposition was this: the Curzon Line to be accepted by all parties as, roughly, the future frontier of Poland: Lvov, and of course Vilna, to be Russian with an exchange of populations if desired: Mikolajek to be prime minister of a provisional government at Lublin, with 7 ministers chosen from among his government in London and 7 from among the Lublin Poles and from other elements who had been in the resistance movement underground all through. General Sosnikowski to be dropped from his command of the army, President Rackiewicz to retire and, probably, Osobka-Morawski to be dropped on the Lublin side, with Beirut, president of the National Council at Lublin, coming more into prominence. Who was to command the armed forces? That was the great difficulty, but it was felt there should be a military council to include General Rola-Zimierski on the Lublin side and certain other generals representing the Polish troops in Italy and on the Western front but probably dropping General Anders, who was *persona non grata* to the Russians, and who had become increasingly a pain in the neck to the British also, by reason of his constant carping at the Russians and his efforts to set Britain and Russia at odds.

This solution had been agreed to by Churchill, Stalin, the Lublin Poles and Mikolajek's party (subject to the approval of a majority of his London cabinet when he got back there). Mikolajek waived his claims to Lvov only with supreme reluctance, and I believe the Lublin Poles would have been glad to see him carry this point too, but Stalin was adamant on this, declaring that if there were

a Polish majority in the city itself and a Russian majority in the country around, it was unfortunate but the matter could be settled by voluntary repatriation. Russia is to have Koenigsberg as a naval base but the rest of East Prussia is to go to Poland absolutely and Stalin also undertook to guarantee to Poland as much of the territory up to the River Oder, including the city of Stettin if necessary but not Breslau, as the Poles desired, or felt it within their competence to absorb. I believe Churchill and Eden said they thought the British Parliament would also guarantee this to Poland. Harriman, who was merely an "observer" and with Roosevelt's election to a fourth term hanging over his head, gave no guarantees of course but did not demur to the solution as a whole.

It seemed to me that the United States Congress might well boggle at so large a slice of Germany going to Poland, even if British opinion would endorse it. But on the other hand, the extent of annexation was really left to the Poles themselves. No one would press them to take more than they thought they could swallow. Was this in conformity with the Atlantic Charter? Certainly not. But the Charter had been issued before America entered the war, before the full horror of German Fascist behaviour had been made manifest, by experience, to the Allied peoples. A couple of the American correspondents, although they thought this Polish solution inevitable, nevertheless reacted against it on moral grounds, as Americans will, and pressed the British Ambassador to say how he could justify something that was in contradiction to the Atlantic Charter? The answer, surely, was that the United States would be obliged to deny the Charter herself after defeating Japan, for she would certainly have to retain control of certain Japanese possessions in the Pacific. You could call that Imperialism, if you liked, but it was none the less desirable if it would prevent another war. And surely no treaty is binding forever and it would be desirable to rewrite the Atlantic Charter itself if that would avert another war.

So Mikolajek is flying back to London at once. He has told Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr that he hopes to be back within 10 days, carrying the consent of most of his London colleagues to the Moscow formula. Some of them of course will refuse. If so, they will be left behind. I believe both Britain and Russia have concluded that the émigré Polish government must really go home: the ministries and the newspapers must be wound up in Britain

and brought back to Poland, where they belong. The existence of a government in exile after part of its homeland had been liberated is unjustifiable, and leads only to intrigue and trouble.

Although Mikolajek is leaving in a glow of goodwill and optimism, those who know him here from his last visit, have their doubts. They think he is fundamentally weak: while in Moscow he comes under the spell of Stalin, then in London he is influenced by the hopeless reactionaries who will *never* agree to any proposal Moscow might bring forth because they know that they themselves are unacceptable in Poland and will never go back. Having nothing to lose, they will stick on beyond the last ditch.

Stefan Litauer, who was once a power in the Polish set-up in London, as head of the Polish news organisation, but who resigned in disgust with the anti-Soviet intrigues, has just arrived here for the London *News-Chronicle* on his way to Lublin. He is very pessimistic about Mikolajek.

"I don't expect him to come back," he said.

What then? "That will be the end of the London 'government,'" he said. "This is their last chance."

I think he is right. I hope he is right. If the London Poles refuse this offer I think we and the United States should withdraw recognition from them and at the same time encourage individuals like Mikolajek, no longer burdened with prime ministerial office, to go back to Poland and take their share in the government. Certainly the longer the National Committee functions in Poland the stronger it becomes. If Mikolajek and his friends don't go back soon, they may find that when they eventually get there the people will have turned away from them.

October 19, 1944.—The thing that struck me most in Churchill's discourse yesterday was the emphasis he laid on friendship between Britain, Russia and America as the foundation of the future. His voice shook with real feeling when he said that if the big three did not hold together, then there would be no hope of peace. And to-day, when he spoke into the microphone at the airport before getting into his plane, he had a happy little phrase about the way they had been working. Stalin stood beside him, with Pavlov translating each word as it fell slowly from Churchill's lips.

"We have worked very hard," he said. "We have been a council of workers and soldiers." He knew that "council" would be translated as "soviet."

"Most of all has it been a pleasure for me, and an honour, to

have so many long and intimate talks with my friend and war comrade, Marshal Stalin, and to deal with the many difficult questions inseparable from the united forward march of great nations through the many vicissitudes of war. I hope most earnestly, and I believe with deep conviction, that the warrior statesman at the head of Russia will lead the Russian peoples—all the peoples of Russia—through these years of storm and tempest into the sunlight of a broader and happier age for all, and that with him in this task will march the British Commonwealth of Nations and the mighty United States of America.”

There was a dispiriting drizzle as the guard of honour marched by and the rain dripped from the peak of Winston's R.A.F. cap, but it was a great occasion, for this was the first time that Stalin had ever gone to the airport to see a visitor off. Churchill took him into the giant “York” and showed him over the machine and its gadgets, then Stalin stepped out. Winston sat at the window, smoking a cigar and waving his hand and at once the machine began to taxi. Stalin, who had saluted in an unusual military style, with his right hand held away from his forehead, now did a completely natural thing. He forgot that he had become a marshal with a diamond star. Feeling in his pocket, he pulled out a handkerchief and began to wave it. It looked a little ridiculous, and a little charming. The aircraft shot away. Winston waved and smiled. The immensely dignified figure in the marshal's topcoat stood fluttering his handkerchief. And as the machine did a rapid circle of the airport, Stalin stood following it around with his eyes. Only after it had vanished in the rainclouds did he walk back to his Packard, through the saluting crowd of generals and officials, and suffer himself to be driven slowly away.

You had the impression that Joseph Stalin had really enjoyed this visit.

We correspondents had *our* party after the visit was all over. The British Ambassador asked some of us to a dinner which was an exact replica of that which had been given to Stalin, except that chicken was served instead of turkey, and we were pleased to see that Stalin had not been given russified or frenchified dishes but an English meal at its best. We had melon; tomato soup served with sour cream; white fish done in wine; sucking-pig served cold with mayonnaise; roast chicken and green peas; cream pudding; mushroom savoury and dessert. The vegetables mostly

came from the Ambassador's own vegetable patch; the mushrooms he had grown himself from spawn scattered on the tennis court, which had not been used since the Moscow blitz. The wines were all Russian but the brandy was French. Without going to extremes of lavishness, it was a superb meal.

Afterwards we sat in the small drawing-room where Stalin and Churchill had talked. Stalin had sat in a grandfather chair near the log fire with Churchill, Harriman and Eden on the adjoining sofa. There they had talked over whiskies and smokes until the dawn. The circle around the fire was so small that Clark-Kerr had sat on the floor.

The heroes of the evening, to my mind, were the two interpreters. The room was full of smoke and rapid, familiar conversation; the atmosphere was relaxed; this was but one in a series of extremely jolly evenings in which the interpreters had shared. But though the Great might stumble over a meaning or doze over a fine point, the luckless linguists had to speak with the precision of machines. Both of them got a medal. They certainly earned one—a medal for endurance through ten days that shook their world (and their digestive apparatus) to its foundations.

"IN AND OUT"

AS A BOY in London I was fascinated by that club in Piccadilly which used to have "In and Out" painted on its gates. It seemed so confident in proclaiming what other clubs along the street were too diffident to assert—the other-worldliness of its sumptuous, chandelier-hung interior with the deft footmen and the deep arm-chairs with their views over the park, compared with the grey street without, strident with newsboys after noon and furtive with corner women after dark.

Something of this contrast between worlds strikes the traveller who passes into, or out of, the Soviet Union. We need not be precise about which is the grey world here, and which the gay: that depends upon the point of view. The point upon which all can agree is that two utterly different worlds *are* in question. The currently fashionable notion that Russia and the Western allies will be able to get along after the war because, after all, there is not now so much difference between their ways of life, is to my mind dangerous nonsense, and I cannot think of any Englishman who has been in Russia since the war who would agree that this was so. The one-sixth of the world over which the Red Flag flies is, on the contrary, quite opposite in most of its norms of life not only when compared with the Democratic West but with any other country outside its boundaries. The difference is still what it was 25 years ago—between Socialism and an unplanned economy. When you are in Russia you do not talk of "going abroad"; you talk of "going out," because you are not merely exchanging one "country" for another but passing from the planned world into that other world where, despite the war, the wealth-producing machinery is still for the most part the property of individuals. What the English child used to be taught in the schoolroom about China applies with far more force to the only completely Socialist country in the world—"the Chinese do everything by opposites, but that does not mean that their civilisation is inferior to ours."

Walter Duranty used to say that the foreign correspondent in

Russia owed it to his sense of proportion to leave Russia at least once a year and this sage advice has generally been followed since, with the necessary allowance for transport difficulties during the war. Instead of a 12 hour flight to London, Moscow has been separated from us by a wearisome air and sea journey which has averaged one month. So I was very fortunate to obtain a few weeks' leave in November, 1944; to be able to get to Egypt with my wife and still be back in Moscow for the opening of the big offensive in Poland on January 12th, 1945.

A sun-hunting holiday in Egypt may seem a frivolous subject for a chapter and a digression from my main theme. Yet what an illumination did this journey not make in my mind! Russia herself, and the relations between Moscow and the west, appeared in an entirely fresh light to one who stepped "Out" after having been "In" for a considerable while. I first came to Russia four months after Stalingrad, with the intention of staying there until the end of the war and I had now been there long enough to see some things almost through Russian eyes. Most impressions of Russia come from those who go "In" for a short period, try not to lose their "Outside" point of view and record their views when they get back to what seems to them the "Norm" of their own country, and indeed that is a global Norm, seeing that five-sixths of the world is, basically, unlike the U.S.S.R. But I left Russia only briefly, with the intention of going "In" again at once, and so I saw Persia and the Middle East and the relationship of the various Allies there very much as a Russian would see them. And what I saw gave me a profound shock and a feeling that, as the European war drew to a close, the basic antagonisms that had caused the war were still far from resolved and that the soldiers wry jest in adversity, "You ain't seen nothing, mate—just wait till Peace breaks out!" was indeed an accurate assessment.

To begin with, the whole thing was like the beginning of a wonderful party. The Russian winter was at its glowering worst when I got leave to go. The flying conditions were so bad that Mr. Churchill's aircraft, which had been sent to fly the British ambassador home, was stuck for ten days at Teheran, and when Iris and I drove out to Moscow airport at half-past five on an icy morning with the snowflakes making a transparent silver curtain against the black backcloth behind the street lamps we thought we would never get off the ground. But the aeroplane roared off into the darkness and climbed for half an hour through a snowstorm

until at last it soared clear above the clouds, into a world of white fleece and warm sunshine. We streaked above a glistening cloud bank that stretched unbroken all the way to Baku, seven hours away. We saw no land until the white wall of the Caucasus range reared up on our right hand. At first we thought it was a continuation of the clouds. Although we flew at 12,000 feet and we knew the world was all dark below, the sun that shafted in at the windows warmed us through our fur caps and overcoats. We felt we had escaped the winter already.

Iris was going home with a book and many photographs about the Soviet ballet. I was to see her on board the ship in Egypt and then get back to my job of reporting the war. For a Western woman, of course, to go "Out" after a long spell "In" affords all the joy of arising from a confinement. Nothing to do with Socialism or the rigidity of the régime. . . . Rather is it the release from the abominable climate, the lack of vegetables and the normal beauty care which Western women of all classes now take absolutely for granted but which creates a howling vacuum in their lives when it is completely withdrawn. Russian women feel this too. You will see much rude health in Russia but little beauty. And where there is the real underlying beauty of bone in the face, the complexion is usually bad, the skin lustreless. A far more varied diet than existed even before the war, an end to stuffing oneself with black bread and potatoes and sunray lamps by the tens of thousand will be necessary before Soviet standards of beauty can compare with those in the West. When you go from Russia into Poland, all the women appear to be goddesses. So it is not merely a matter of wealth or resources. However, we need not despair. Russian girls are determined to be beautiful: they love *chic* when they see it and no doubt they will attain elegance one day. But meanwhile, the Western woman suffers with them. I have seen a woman arrive in Moscow with her advance reputation as a Cairene or London beauty fully maintained, yet lose her looks after six months in Russia—and find them again as soon as she went back to the kind of life she was used to outside.

Baku was free from snow. Yet the heavy skies of the Russian winter hung over Azerbaijan and it was not until the aircraft had climbed above the mountains of Gilan that we felt the change. Then, almost at once, the climate of continental Russia gave way to the clear atmosphere of the Orient. We were over the razor-edged spine of the snowy Persian peaks. Looking back, I saw the immense

Russian plain rolled out behind me, sombre beneath black clouds, as far as the eye could reach. Ahead the sky was electric blue. The very air smelled clean. The jagged mountains glistened like shark's teeth under the rays of a brassy sun. The dark forests that clung to the mountains on the Russian side fell away. The Persian peaks were clean rock and down at their bases you could see the barren villages clustering—mud villages, with flat Oriental roofs and a few almond trees sticking up along the dry water courses. In a matter of seconds you passed out of the black European winter into the clean brightness of the Oriental winter.

It was fun to land in Teheran again, for the fifth time in this war, and to see that Iris looked at the right things first. She was overcome by the easy melting of one world into the other and, with the honest appreciation of one who has supported the awful boredom of wartime England, kept exclaiming, "This flying is so wonderful—I feel I am travelling *far* above my station."

It is difficult for the war correspondent not to become a Travel Snob. At this time I knew far more people in Persia than I did in England. And when we got to Cairo I found that the old bromide they tell there was literally true, "If you sit on the terrace of Shepheard's long enough, you will see every one you have ever known."

Ian Fleming came strolling down the steps, a commander in the Naval Intelligence, flying around the world "making contacts" with an impressive air of smooth secrecy. Maurice Hindus walked in, on his way to Luxor. Edgar Snow raced through, bound for New York in 48 hours. Soldiers I had known in the Western Desert, with Wingate in Burma, in Bagdad, Karachi and Hamadan walked up and down those dusty stairs as though they had been materialised through the abracadabra of the "Gulli Gulli" Boy who slithered with his bag of snakes and worn conjuring tricks between the tables. No fewer than four war correspondents of the *Daily Express* showed up one after the other, bound for different fronts all over the map.

I was back under the old confident umbra of the British Raj, which at first seemed quite unshaken by events in the rest of the world. None of these people seemed to feel they were "Living in a Revolution." At Gezireh races I saw the same horse-faced majors running the same subaltern-faced horses as in the days when Auchinleck was fighting in the desert. Something of this atmosphere attaches to any British colony anywhere, of course. Even

in Moscow, just before leaving, we had lived through an episode which was almost sufficient to convince one that the British Empire might be subject to decay, but not to change. His Majesty's diplomatic missions to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—all of them—had been notified that they could not attend the celebrations of the great October Revolution because Queen Victoria's youngest daughter had died. The court mourning which was being observed by the British and Canadian embassies and the Australian and New Zealand Legations did not expire until the day after the Soviet Government held its big annual reception so that unless our missions reversed the technique of Cinderella by arriving at the ball *after* midnight, they would not be able to go at all. Queen Victoria had laid down that parties at which more than eight were present could not be attended during Court mourning. Why eight? Because Edward VII had objected that otherwise it would be impossible to have even a small dinner followed by a couple of tables of bridge. It seemed that the British Empire would be represented at the celebration of Russia's national day only by British newspapermen. But at the last moment one of our traditional compromises was arranged. The top-ranking members of each mission were authorised by their Foreign Offices to attend; but they might not dance and they must leave before the midnight hour struck.

However, it would certainly be untrue to suggest that in the moral and ideological conflict between the Soviet and the non-Soviet world it is only the British who cut an incongruous figure. Far from it. As soon as we stepped from the plane at Teheran and felt the joyous warmth of the sun on our backs once more, the American officers who had travelled with us began to congratulate each other on having got out of Russia.

"Civilisation at last!" exclaimed one, stretching himself luxuriously. "Thank God we're back in a world of decent restaurants, decent drinks and decent-looking dames!"

Well, I am very fond of Persia and it certainly was a pleasure to see the stalls piled high with rich fruits and to eat a four-course dinner in a sophisticated room with a Conga dance orchestra and nude murals painted by refugee Poles—but I would not describe as "civilisation" a city where perhaps 10,000 people live in luxury while 790,000 live like pigs. Russia at war was joyless and hard but her people were proud and self-assured and what little comfort existed was spread out over the whole population, European and

Oriental, without jobbery or bribery, strictly on the basis of duty done. Moscow had no Parc Hotel, no amusing night-clubs; but neither had she syphilitic beggars whining in her streets and filthy children on whose bodies you could actually see the typhus lice crawling. If Teheran or Cairo meant "civilisation" to these officers while Moscow represented barbarism, then I could only marvel at their lack of sensibility—and opt for barbarism myself, every time. Is not this the real Decline of the West of which Spengler wrote, to judge a civilisation by its froth, instead of by its substance? By such standards as these, Japan would be more "civilised" than New Zealand, for the pleasures of Tokyo were certainly superior to the modest comforts of Wellington.

Our next shock was administered by a friend in the British Embassy who inquired, was it a fact that Marshal Voroshilov was now leading a revolt against Stalin in the Ukraine? I took a quick look at him, expecting to see a smile. But none came. He had, it seemed, a number of Polish friends in Teheran and had been among them enough, imbibing the Fairy Tale atmosphere of the Polish emigration, to believe that this could be true. Voroshilov had just been "freed from his duties" as member of the War Cabinet—the National defence committee of five—and Nikolai Bulganin, a bearded man of 55, scarcely known outside Russia, but with a high reputation as an industrial executive, had taken his place. And this was quite enough for the Polish Rumour Factory in Teheran to get to work on. (A few weeks later I saw Voroshilov with Stalin at a parade in Red Square so that his "revolt" and subsequent pardon must have followed each other rather more swiftly than is usually the case in the U.S.S.R.)

As soon as the Polish colony knew I had arrived from Moscow they descended upon me in a body and I rapidly found out that this Voroshilov tale was not just a laughable rumour but symptomatic of the unhealthy and utterly unreal vacuum in which these unhappy people were living. They were not only poisoning their own lives with plotting and suspicion but were doing their best to make mischief between London, where their exiled leaders were, and Moscow.

A Polish countess told me of her sufferings in Russia. I could well believe that they were intense. In 1941 and 1942 everybody in Russia suffered intensely. But I could not believe, as she affected to do, that the Russians had reserved special privations for her which they managed to side-step themselves. She complained that

they had stolen everything from her—even little trinkets of only sentimental value. I could not refrain from challenging her to say where the gold watch and the pearl necklace she wore had come from.

"Oh," she conceded negligently, "they were presents from my husband, before the war."

A secretary of the London Polish Legation, introducing me to his wife, a comely young woman, said the Russians had treated her with great cruelty in prison. In what did that cruelty consist, I asked?

"They deprived her of anything to read," he said solemnly. "And to one who is fond of books, that is cruelty indeed."

He went on to assert that to "cultured people" such as his wife and himself, the Russians must appear just as barbarous as the Germans. At this my temperature began to rise. This man was personally brave. He had fought at Tobruk, before leaving the Polish Army. But having left his country before the Germans had completed its occupation, he just did not know what they had done there.

"A pity you did not stay in Poland," I told him. "But for your wife's sake, I am glad she did not."

"What is the difference between a Russian and a German prison?" he inquired, with philosophic detachment.

"Just this," I told him. "Your wife came out of a Russian prison alive and well. She was neither starved nor beaten. Do you know what would have happened to her in a German prison? She could have ended up in a furnace at Maidanek."

I asked him how many Poles, including the army, were now grouped around the London Government.

"Just 250,000," he said. "But this emigration represents the cream of the country."

Observing my raised eyebrows, he continued: "Poland is not an educated democracy, like others. Her intelligentsia are precious to her and those of us who emigrated owe the nation the duty of not returning until we are convinced that Poland's future liberty is assured."

"What will convince you of that?"

"Nothing but the complete withdrawal of the Russians from our country."

"But how can the Russians withdraw when they are fighting the Germans in Germany and when they will need access across

Poland to maintain their army of occupation in Germany after the war?"

"Just so. We cannot be sure that the Russians will go. Therefore it is desirable to maintain a neucleus of Polish patriots abroad, indefinitely, to speak in the name of a country which may not be entirely freed of aliens for years."

"You sound as though you were getting ready to drive a taxicab in Buenos Aires. . . ."

"Oh, not me. I can get a good job in South America. Why, I might have emigrated there before the war, in any case."

"How many of the present émigrés might have emigrated in any case?"

"Our Polish intelligentsia have a tradition of emigration. We have been partitioned before. But there have always been Poles ready to accept exile with their families for 100 years, if need be, to speak in Poland's name while she was under alien rule."

"Are you seriously suggesting that many Poles do not plan to go home in *any* event . . . that you intend to keep a sort of Polish rump government going abroad, whatever the Russians do?"

He thought a moment. Then said: "You English ask us to take Russia's word that we shall be free. Only time can prove whether Russia will keep her word, or not. To ensure that Poland shall have spokesmen whatever Russia does, it is certainly desirable that certain Poles should prepare themselves for exile."

I told him that if England had gone the way of Poland, I personally would have gone home and given the new régime a chance to work out, rather than settle in the Argentine. But, of course, if one had been contemplating making a career in the Argentine in *any* case, then what right would one have in the years to come to claim trusteeship for the millions who had stayed behind in the old country?

He conceded that, in the long run, most of the émigrés might come to terms and go home. But an *élite* of the nation would consecrate itself to exile at least until the Russians withdrew and the "present government of Communist Russian puppets" came to an end.

Did he really believe that liberated Poland was being administered only by Red puppets, I inquired? Did he suppose that General Rola-Zimersky's army, now 300,000 strong, were all Bolsheviks?

"Rola is a Communist," came the astonishing reply, "after all, he sympathised with the Republicans in Spain."

"By *that* test, my poor misguided friend, a majority of the entire populations of England and the United States are Communists too."

With that we parted—I only to run into a Polish journalist, a white-faced plump young man with very shrewd eyes who remarked that the time for a settlement with Russia had now come.

"We have been waiting," he said, "to see what would happen in Greece. That was the testing-ground to show whether England still had any influence in Europe. But now English soldiers are firing on the Greeks who until last month were fighting the Germans while Greek Quislings and collaborators stand behind General Scobie, applauding. Plainly, England has lost the war in the political field. That means that Russia has won it. We can no longer count on England, therefore we had better come to terms with Russia."

"Your desire for a settlement with Russia does you credit," I replied, "but I regret to hear the reason which induced this frame of mind."

But as I move southward this man's argument kept creeping back into my mind. For in the Middle East three issues between Russia and the Western Allies presented themselves in ever sharper and more painful terms—Poland, Greece and Persia—and in all three England and America were not cutting a very elegant figure. We were, to put it bluntly, on the losing end. And this could be seen in almost any coffee shop where Arabs, Greeks and Persians heard the radio and talked politics.

We came down at Damascus as dusk was falling and the French officers on the airfield were talking about Greece. Night fell as we flew over the Mediterranean at Tel Aviv, and an enormous moon came up, coating our wings with silver and casting our shadow on the rolling desert. The Suez Canal twinkled with the lights of ships; Ismailieh was a nest of glow-worms and the camps on the desert were like scores of night lights under pots, in geometrical rows. At Heliopolis the runways were not lit; the plane landed by the light of the moon. It was a glorious return to Egypt. But all my pleasure was edged with a feeling of unease. Cairo, which had been precious to me since the brave days of 1941, had shed its old urgent charm because death and devilment were no longer brothers there; devilment went on of an evening but parties which wore out the night were not the same now that there was no desert to go back to in the dawn. And how many things that

once had jarred but slightly now seemed altogether tasteless, because I came from Russia. . . .

The royal progress of the British Ambassador up the race-track, as though at Ascot, and the playing of "God Save the King" as he stepped out of his car, as though he were still High Commissioner and Egypt not an independent country . . . the Levantine journalist who concluded our interview about Russia with the superb summation—"the Russians believe in their way of life and we feel that our Egyptian way of life is superior and one wonders how such different viewpoints can be reconciled?"

Egypt a "way of life" with its millions of diseased, illiterate peasants and its Pashas of foreign stock with their absolutely feudal contempt for the Fellah in the field, the real descendant of the Pharaonic race!

The streets were sanded and policed for an hour before the fat young king drove by in a scarlet Rolls-Royce to open a new Mosque (always more mosques to please the archaic rulers of Al Azhar University who still teach the same syllabus as when the Arab race fell into its decline; but never money for schools and hospitals). Standing before the shining glory of the Tutankhamen relics in the great museum I realised that the Egyptian peasant of to-day has scarcely advanced a yard in culture in thousands of years. An Egyptian paper announced a new rationing system, supposed to be copied from the Democratic West—"Rations will be based on income and the size of the family. The larger the income of a family, the larger will be the ration allowed." Iris and I read this over and over, laughing aloud until it hurt for it did not seem possible that such Jabberwock could emanate in all seriousness from a government which was shortly to declare war on Germany and ally itself with the Red Army and the glorious tradition of Lenin-grad and Stalingrad. But people who lived in Egypt saw in this nothing grotesque. Were *we* mad then? If the standards of the fat Pashas and the Anglophile Levantines with their Glen Urquhart suitings and their wives with 5-inch heels and oiled hair piled a foot high in the Parisian Occupation style . . . if *their* standards were sane, then 190 million Russians must be crazy. For between this world and the world we had come from no point of human contact existed—it was Gulliver among the *Houyhnhnms* over again. . . .

And was the *point d'appui* between the Russians and our own folk much closer?

There was that Catholic, with long experience of Russia, who

so typically declared: "Trouble with the Russians is . . . they've got no sense of sin. One despairs of a race without that saving grace. Did you ever see an indecent inscription in a Russian lavatory?"

To which the answer could be: "In the present state of those institutions in Russia, who would wish to stay in one long enough to scribble anything?"

On a more serious plane I met a few (thank God, not many) officers who still uttered that truly treasonable formula: "We are fighting the wrong war."

At dinner in Shepherd's a prodigious coxcomb with the uniform of a famous regiment encasing his willowy limbs (what Jane Austen would have called a *rattle*) was gushing to a young Egyptian about the "marvellous places" he used to visit, before the war. *Such* week-end parties! He was *enthralled, my dear*, with one of the richest girls in the world, who was staying in the hotel. Would his Egyptian friend like an introduction? It could be arranged, but Shukri must positively introduce *him* to the brunette who was dancing past the band leader now . . . no, not the dim one . . . the *supremely* bedworthy creature in silver. Hands clasped in ecstasy, eyes closed, the long lashes lying like brushes on his cheek, he exclaimed: "*What* a body!" My mind jerked over to the bodies I had seen in Russia—thin ones, starved on tea and black bread, feet in broken boots . . . burned bodies stacked like logs at Klooga . . . hacked-up bodies in the abbatoir at Maidanek. The young pimp's voice shrilled into laughter. And I thought, Good Heavens, is it possible that educated people in England still talk like a Number Two touring company doing a Frederick Lonsdale comedy . . . "too frightfully amusing . . . chahming gels . . . smartest place in tahn . . ." Is all this waiting to start all over again as soon as the *real* war between Germany and Russia, in which 15 million men have died, ends and enables stock exchanges to boom again and hard-faced industrialists in the North to turn their sons into "gentlemen" like this, at £3000 a head? If so, my country, 'tis of Thee I am ashamed. . . . A shameful admission. But what are we doing in Greece and Belgium? Why is Scobie being used to break a general strike in Athens, instead of fighting our enemies?

What is our message for the small countries we are liberating? "Out with the Germans, and back to the Status Quo Ante." Why do so many of the peasants and workers of Europe look to the Russians,

not to us? What have we got that the Russians haven't got? Habeas Corpus, Trial by Jury, "fair play" whatever that may mean when men starve and Quislings go unpunished, the Liberal tradition, the ability to compromise. . . . We have Winston Churchill, a grand old fellow. Writes the best eighteenth century prose being turned out anywhere to-day, a believer in Tory Democracy just like Lord Randolph and Disraeli before him, "Trust the People, I always say," though it's rather more important that the people should trust the ministers, their servants.

A fierce old major supplies one answer: "Face the facts, we are a degenerate people—been going downhill a long while. Everybody knows it except ourselves. Kindly folk, compromisers, We Can Take It, all right, but that's no longer enough. In our prime, We Could Dish it Out too. Who's going to play Metternich at the next Congress of Vienna? You know who!"

I don't like this talk. But the facts which give rise to it keep striking me between the eyes. Nobody likes what we are doing in Greece—except the few Greek bankers and shipowners whom one sees in the hotel lobbies with their elegant daughters, waiting till we have killed enough E.L.A.S. men to make it safe for them to go home to Athens. The old Greek stationer who used to extract the sand from my typewriter when I brought it back from the desert and who used to press pencils into my hand "as a present, because of all you have done for us," now bends a hurt gaze on the floor and says nothing. Prince and Princess Peter of Greece—she born in St. Petersburg, a most engaging woman, hung with pearls and sables and looking for all the world like Lynn Fontanne in the rôle of a Romanov princess—are quite emphatic that it is a terrible thing that Englishmen should be firing on Greeks, no matter what the circumstances. The Princess makes us smile by throwing her voice across the drawing-room, as though Alfred Lunt were just stepping in at the french window, in the delicious query: "Tell me, who keeps a salon in Moscow nowadays?" And she tells us that her friend the Soviet Minister has undertaken that she shall make a trip to Moscow, in recognition for the work she has done in raising money for Russian war relief. But the rest of our evening with her is clouded over by the consciousness that the only British divisions in the Balkans are fighting their allies, not Fascists.

The Russians enter Rumania and Bulgaria in pursuit of the Germans and stay there to secure their line of communication into Hungary, where they are fighting Germans. We enter Greece when

the Red Army has made it too dangerous for the Germans to stay there any more and remain there, presumably to feed the starving—certainly not to fight, though the Germans are still in Crete undisturbed. In Bulgaria two score Quislings are sentenced to death. In Greece not one. The Bulgarian army marches against the Germans with the Russians. In Greece we fight the men who fought the Germans while in Cairo I see the Greek soldiers and airmen sitting in the cafés—we dare not use them because the men are too E.A.M. and the officers too Royalist.

Wherever the Red Army goes the local Communists get that share in the government to which their dominance in every Resistance movement entitles them. When Churchill lands in Greece he labels Communism and Anarchy together, though he must know that one is the antithesis of the other; then with a bow to Stalin he says E.A.M. are “Trotskyite” and Sir Walter Citrine says they are “under the complete domination of the Communists.” So what? When Communists participate in the government of Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, what hope have we of preventing them doing the same in Greece, especially when our troops depart to get on with the war? Later, when the Grosa government is set up in Rumania, the State Department chimes in with a demand for consultation with Russia because “the Communist-controlled National Democratic Front is considered in Washington as a minority government, not representative of all the democratic elements in the country.” England and America, after quarter of a century, have decided that Communism in Russia has produced a strong ally, a friend in peace as in war. But apparently Communism is not to be adopted anywhere else. “Soviet Communism—a new Civilisation?” asked Sidney and Beatrice Webb. But not if the Foreign Office and the State Department have anything to say about it.

The British and American armies carry their own ideology with them—liberal Capitalism. The Red Army carries its ideology too, but unlike the Western Allies it has made a real effort to compromise and not to impose its way upon the countries it has conquered. Nothing could have been easier than for the Russians to set up a Communist régime in Finland, Bulgaria or Rumania. But they abstained, making from their point of view a real concession, to meet the Allies half-way. This at first led the Allies to conclude that Stalin had gone Conservative: of course he had done nothing of the kind, he was only trying in his own way to reach a

modus vivendi. But what I see here makes me doubt whether a *modus vivendi* is indeed possible. Now our Conservative propaganda is boomeranging back upon us—"Russia is no longer Communist," "she is reverting to Capitalism." Palpable nonsense, for everywhere the Russian way of life clashes with ours, when the two meet.

America and England had their own revolutions long ago and seem determined that no other country shall enjoy one. The country that produced that great revolutionary document, the Declaration of Independence (though it never lived up to it) and the England of Cromwell and Gerrard Winstanley, the inspirer of Karl Marx, are in effect saying: "The work begun by Lenin and Stalin may be consummated within Russia but it shall not take root outside." And what is the difference between that and the old Cordon Sanitaire or the anti-Comintern manoeuvre of the European Fascists?

Fascism sprouted in Europe as an antidote to the spread of Marxism. In this war Fascism has been defeated. Does it not follow that the growth of Marxism, interrupted everywhere except inside Russia through the efforts of Hitler and Mussolini, will now be renewed at an even faster tempo? What is to restrain it? Apparently the will of Churchill's England, stiffened by the United States. If one accepted that premise fully, one would have to reconcile oneself to the loathsome inevitability of another war. Marxism has proved itself in this war. It is immensely strong. Particularly powerful is its attraction and effect upon Oriental peoples. In China and India, the Power reservoirs of the future, what has the United States to array against it save Sears-Roebuckism, the philosophy of the travelling salesman writ large? The success of the Russian Marxists in dealing with the Oriental Empire which they inherited should be a lesson to Henry Luce and the American neo-Imperialists. It is much cheaper to let backward peoples develop themselves through Marxism than to lend them millions so that they may keep your own economy from toppling by buying your surplus production.

Marxism is in the Orient to stay. We find its methods funny, but they work. King Farouk told a visiting ambassador, a friend of mine—"Now we have these dreadful Bolsheviks in Egypt; we must thank the British for that." But when the Soviet charge d'affaires, a Muslim from Soviet Asia, appears with the king at the mosque every Friday, Farouk is gratified. No other Western diplomat does that.

In Persia our people scoff at the "demonstrations" which march through Teheran, Meshed and Isfahan, supporting the Russian demand for an oil concession in the North. A paid mob, trotted out with Russian money—any one can get out a demonstration on those lines, they say. Just so, we have done it often enough ourselves in Oriental countries. The *real* Persians—by which is meant the merchant class, the tiny minority of the educated—don't agree, I am told. These are the only people who count, in the non-democratic East—the only people we and the Americans deal with. But what if the illiterate mob, which has no ideas and will shout any slogan it is paid to shout, is not only organised by the Russians, but *given* ideas in which it can believe—"an oil concession will bring wealth to all Northern Persia, provide jobs and the material basis on which the backward people can educate and elevate themselves?" The illiterate mob then ceases to be a negligible factor in the Orient. For the first time a great power, instead of ruling indirectly through the existing ruling class, appeals directly to the *mobile* and begins to work through them.

We who have never tried such a policy in the Orient cannot guess what the result may be. But some of our soldiers can see plainly enough. I met a group of intelligent officers loaned by the army to buy wheat all over Persia and store it in the government silos. Thanks to them once-starving Persia now has a year's supply of wheat, and these men have seen what is going on in the small towns and villages. They report that the message which reaches Persia from across the northern frontier is having a profound effect. No soil could be more receptive to revolution than that of modern Persia—unless it be Egypt's. One of these officers gives me his belief that very soon the northern provinces of Persia will be found applying for union in the U.S.S.R.—"and a good thing too," says he. The miserable Persian peasant and labourer will be the gainer: the feudal walled villages owned by absentee landlords are just waiting to be turned into collective farms. Nor will the Persians fall under a foreign yoke for in Soviet Azerbaijan there are plenty of technicians and administrators who understand their brethren in Persian Azerbaijan. Kaftaradze, the assistant Commissar whom the Russian Foreign Office sent to negotiate the oil lease, is a Georgian: 50 per cent of the intelligentsia in Northern Persia are Armenians. Lately they have been spending their spare time raising money to buy tanks for their distinguished compatriot, the Red Army General Bagramian. Russian influence has

always been strong in North Persia. The deposed Shah Reza, who died in Johannesburg, rose to power through his career in the Cossack cavalry. There is an important White Russian colony in North Persia and nowadays these people are Russian Nationalists before everything. Therefore the eventual incorporation of North Persia in the Soviet Union would seem to be a "natural."

Yet, for the time being, the Russians have had to back water. Through Anglo-American pressure, the oil scheme has been shelved. I find the arguments against it hypocritical and unconvincing; why should not a Socialist state have a concession abroad? Would we relinquish our oil concession in South Persia if Britain went Socialist? The argument that the simultaneous American request for a concession in the south, though abandoned also until after the war in deference to Persia's awkward status as an occupied although "independent" ally, was less "dangerous" for her independence because American oil men are private capitalists while Soviet oil men are state officials, falls down because a majority of the shares in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company are held by the British Government. In any case, British oil interests have already looked over North Persia and come to the conclusion that to pipe the oil over the mountains down to the Persian Gulf would hardly be worth the cost; the natural egress for this oil is on to the Caspian and so into Russia.

There is of course a genuine and proud Persian nationalism, based on the glorious past. Its hold on the present is tenuous. I strolled in the rain past the Imperial villa and saw the beautiful young empress gazing pensively out of the window of her child's nursery, a huge teddy bear on her arm. The young Shah is a good fellow but the monarchy is not securely based: his father wanted to become president, like Ataturk, and only mounted the Peacock Throne reluctantly, against his better judgment.

The Peacock Throne itself stands in the Gulestan Palace; beside another alabaster throne, it looks very small, though studded with enormous emeralds. Glowering over both thrones is a demoniac over-life portrait of Reza Shah wearing the high imperial crown, painted in dark angry tones, like a Gerald Brockhurst.

Almost symbolically, the young Shah's likeness is a small photograph, suspended over the Peacock Throne in a cheap wooden frame. The Gulestan is approached through neglected gardens which I found deep in snow. An open-air audience chamber inset with mirror-glass and oil portraits of former Shahs is losing its

splendid yellow tiles, one by one. A steep, rickety staircase leads to the throne-room which is covered with a profusion of gorgeous rugs, thrown down higgledy-piggledy with their borders overlapping, like cheap druggets in a boarding-house. In glass cases around the enormous chamber is a collection of porcelain, some fine, but most of it trumpery. This whole sanctuary of Imperial Iran is permeated with a sad charm. The low-lying palace is overwhelmed by a huge Boche-built government building behind it. The whole effect is triste, faded—the art of a people long lapsed into degeneracy. And *how* long! Describing his journey into Persia in 1598 in the suite of Sir Anthony Sherley, the British Ambassador, one Abel Pinçon deplores the cruelty of Shah Abbas towards his subjects:

“He cutting off their heads for the slightest offence, having them stoned, quartered, flayed alive and given alive to the dogs or to the 40 Anthropophagi and man eaters that he always has by him”; but finds mitigation in the necessity for the Shah “to keep a tight rein on their innate bad instincts.” By nature, says this sixteenth century reporter, the Persians are “very dangerous, extremely greedy for money, liars, wantons, blackguards, drunkards, cheats and in a word base, worthless and entirely lacking in courage, though there are some modern authors who have praised them to the skies and commended the nobles of Persia for generosity and liberality. Either their knowledge of the present state of the country is very poor or they speak not of those of this century.”

Indeed, the *Lares et Penates* of Persia present no more of a challenge to the harsh, young vigour of Soviet Russia than does the tomb of Tamburlaine at Samarkand; one can imagine the Gulestan and the mosques of Teheran being preserved with the same scrupulousness as the relics of Samarkand and Bokhara which also possess no relevance to the new life that has grown up around them.

What really shook me during this journey were the numbers of English and Americans we met who did not realise that the world of 1939 was not coming back.

“Things are going to be different after the war,” they would say, in the old 1914-18 phrase, but without meaning a word of it.

The English seemed to accept our own definition of Democracy at its face value, did not believe that any other kind of Democracy could exist and seemed not only satisfied with our way of life before the war but appeared to believe that it was a model which the world still desired to copy. They even believed that our peculiar monarchy was an article of export, which was why they thought a king in Greece and Spain would be a "stabilising influence." Having forgotten that their own liberties had been won by military force and the execution of a king and those of the United States by bloody civil strife in which Americans sought the aid of Frenchmen against their own blood brethren, they could not see that in some parts of the world bullets, not ballots, were still needed if freedom was to be won. Nor were they conscious of the frightful caricature of democracy which has resulted in so many countries who imitated British parliamentary forms during the nineteenth century but turned their parliaments into shooting galleries and their elections into farces in which the government in power perpetuated itself indefinitely.

Under their very eyes, in Egypt, a Wafdist government thrown out of office by the king did not even contest the ensuing election for they knew that the politicians who replaced them would win every seat. Then a prime minister who declared war on Germany was shot dead at the tribune by a political opponent. In Persia monopolists who should have been shot for starving the people got themselves elected to parliament in the best democratic style and passed laws which ensured that the common people would continue in starvation, disease and addiction to opium. In Greece, before the war, a ruthless dictator had ruled; in Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia parliaments had become convenient machines for keeping genuine democracy at arm's length; Hitler had climbed to power in a constitutional, parliamentary way; even in England, at that moment, no man or woman under thirty had ever voted and many of those older, given a choice between a tired business man and a superannuated trades union official in most constituencies, cast their ballot with the feeling that they personally were not getting any representation at all.

All these people were convinced that "Soviet Democracy" was an insincere joke. They could not conceive that a Balkan peasant or factory worker might genuinely prefer a Soviet to a fraudulent imitation of a "Democracy" whose British original had itself grown so imperfect—that while Habeas Corpus and tolerance in

political and personal relationships are blessings in themselves—bread, security and a job for every man are the basis upon which future civil liberties may be built but for lack of which, parliaments and paper constitutions are an empty mockery.

Others I met, filled with fine dreams of the England they would build after the war, did not understand that we cannot expect to rank in the counsels of the world on the basis of our future hopes, but only on our present performance. And the fact is that though we British have fought a tough and brilliant war of defence, we have fought without a political aim. The strength of Soviet Russia in this war is the strength of revolutionary France before Bonaparte arose to pervert the ideals which opened the doors of Europe to the French common people in arms. Britain deserves to be loved by her allies because she staunchly held the pass for a year when all seemed lost. But the England which Churchill inherited from Chamberlain was not an arbiter among the nations and an example for others to follow: it was an England fallen lower than at any time since the loss of the American colonies, incapable of waging war without a military shot in the arm from the United States which made the proportion of lend-lease aid to Russia seem a fleabite, incapable of holding Malaya and Burma, incapable of mobilising the broad masses of India in their own defence,* incapable in the first three years of producing a single tank that could match the German machines, incapable when Australia and New Zealand were menaced with invasion of sparing a single regiment for their defence. And yet I met Englishmen between Moscow and Cairo who persisted in thinking of the British Empire as it existed when Kipling began to write and waxed indignant if you pointed out that though a fine future could still be before us, the war had shown that this must obviously be on different lines. Worse than that, they could not get outside their own skins sufficiently to see ourselves as others must see us; they based their political calculations on facts which no longer existed. Wriggling and twisting in every direction out of fear of having Communism as a bedfellow, they got themselves into untenable positions and predicted solutions which were plainly beyond the strength of our diminished British Commonwealth to reach.

And some of their fears were really groundless. A friend of mine in *Psychological Warfare* who told me ruefully: "For six months we've been hotting up something very special—but now

*What are two million volunteers out of a population of 365 millions?

the Russians have done it for us,"* was grievously exercised lest Bulgaria become Communist. It seemed he cherished gallant memories of the night life in Sofia, which he feared might never be the same again. But why in the name of British common sense should a Communist Bulgaria be a worry to any Englishman, if she became as faithful an ally as Communist Russia, dedicated herself to peace and trade and paid her obligations as promptly as the U.S.S.R. had done?

In point of fact, a Communist Bulgaria was not even in question. Just as you get a fresh and really more accurate view of Europe when you turn the map of the continent upside down until the British Isles are in the south-eastern corner and Constantinople in the north-western, so we in Moscow who had had the advantage of looking at our continent from the other end were in no doubt that the shape of things to come was not a Communist pattern. Rather was it essentially the old Popular Front pattern of which so much had been hoped before Leon Blum fell, before Munich. In all the countries liberated in the East so-called "National governments" had been formed, differing from Mr. Baldwin's conception of that phrase by being based upon a Progressive, rather than a conservative coalition—Socialists, Communists, peasant parties, radicals, liberals. A natural trend, surely, given the prestige of the liberating Red Army—that army in which you hardly find an officer over field rank who is not a member of the Communist party; and given the fact that for the most part it was not business men and landowners who were tortured to death in the concentration camps but Communists, radicals and progressives of every colour.

When Rumania negotiated an armistice in Moscow Prince Stirbey the landowner and Mr. Popp, the peasant politician, came along; but by far the most important rôle was played by Patrascanu the Communist. It was Patrascanu who laid the groundwork for getting his country out of the German grip by contacting King Michael secretly, slipping into his palace during the black-out and acting as go-between between the anti-fascist underground and the regular army, who alone possessed sufficient arms to offer resistance to the Germans. Accordingly, the Rumanian communists' although they do not govern, exert an influence in the

*Recalling General Beroyuzov's dictum in the Crimea: "The only psychological warfare a German understands is a shrewd blow over the noddle with the butt of a Tommy-gun."

state which would have been inconceivable in the days of King Carol.

It is the same story in other countries where the underground was active, especially in countries where Communism was formerly suppressed, because the very fact of suppression gave the Communists unique experience in organising agitation underground, which in turn gave them leadership when it came to organising a secret anti-fascist struggle. In France and Italy as well as in the Balkans it is a commonplace that the Communists have greatly strengthened themselves by leadership of the resistance groups. The Russians, however, do not intend to make Communism an article of export although if a swing towards Communism should develop in a given country they would certainly approve of it—just as Mr. Churchill would approve of a return to a soundly-based bourgeois government and monarchy in Belgium or the Netherlands. Yet, six months after the war is won, we are likely to find only one old-fashioned conservative government in Europe, the Netherlands and only three of the clerical-authoritarian type—Eire, Spain and Portugal.

What then will be the prevailing pattern? Surely, it will be Republican, with transport and heavy industry for the most part under national ownership but with light industry, especially that in small plants, still privately owned and the small family shop or business still in being. In Eastern Europe the large estates will be broken up and there will be a limit placed on the amount of land any peasant family may own, with co-operative marketing for all but no collectivisation, in the Russian sense. It would seem that the pattern of Public Enterprise in mines, steel, railways and large factories coupled with private ownership in smaller units will be wellnigh universal in Europe—in Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria, Rumania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and probably in France and Italy as well. In Poland the provisional government has declared that foreign capital will be welcomed and I believe this will be true in other liberated countries in the East. But the earning power of capital will be lower than before. The pre-war interest on bank deposits in the U.S.S.R. of six per cent may be taken as the upper limit. The days of foreign companies paying dividends of 20 or even 30 per cent on business done in European countries are gone.

Such areas of liberated Europe as I have seen are in no mood to welcome travelling salesmen at present. Their cities are heaps of

rubble, their people have been starving and they look to a strong government, aided by U.N.R.R.A. to get the wheel of life turning slowly over again. The very phrase, "Private Ownership" assumes a grotesque twist before such a spectacle as the ruins of Warsaw. "A revival of international trade," that panacea of dear old Cordell Hull, bless his heart, can have little meaning to these countries whose whole fabric has been torn to shreds. They have nothing left with which to trade. An influx of American automobiles and washing-machines would certainly be delightful, but it would be a one-way traffic. It is going to take two years, working with German labour, to clear the ruins of Warsaw alone, before any rebuilding can begin.

Politically, the Cordon Sanitaire has been turned inside out. The gaggle of small countries who used to look to Russia, half in hope, half in fear, have radically changed. There will be no anti-Soviet groups in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria or Yugoslavia. A new federated Yugoslavia under Marshal Tito may, in due course, federate with Bulgaria which would give the Red Army direct access from the Black Sea into the heart of Europe in case of a new *Drang nach Osten* against the south Slavs. "Admiral" Horthy will have tittuped off the stage of history on his white horse and Istanbul will no longer be full of German agents. The anti-Comintern goose will have been cooked everywhere, except perhaps in the Vatican, whence the Russians still detect a whiff of that once succulent but now overhung bird. The historic Papal policy of always coming to terms with the temporal power will presumably operate even yet when popular governments, Leftist in character, have been installed in the greater part of Europe. There is a future for Catholicism in Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia to-morrow when these countries are allied with Russia, and there seems no good reason why political hostility should persist between Moscow and Rome. Having credited the Pope in the past with being astute, the Russians must now ask themselves: "Well, what is he waiting for?"

The issue is now clear beyond a peradventure. The old dream of a league of Catholic states to "resist Bolshevism" is ended because there won't be Bolshevism in liberated Europe, but a compromise, with Left overtones. Ended, that's to say, everywhere except in Franco's Spain. And very few Russians believe Franco will still be ruling, a year after Hitler's defeat.

That is the prospect before us. It seems to me gentle enough,

even from an English Conservative viewpoint, but if it frightens this type of mind and if a movement of resistance is launched, then a clash is bound to develop. And in that event—apart from the tragedy of breaking up the coalition—we would almost certainly be on the losing end because we are no longer the first industrial power, the first air power or the first sea power and we never were the first military power. As for the moral aspect, before throwing down a challenge, we would do well to make sure that we ourselves possess a way of life that *does* constitute a challenge and an alternative to the pattern I have outlined. Despite all the abominations of Hitler, our towns before this war were dirtier than Germany's, and our workers in many areas lived in worse slums than Hitler's robots. The old heritage of which we are rightly proud—civil liberties, inviolability of the person, due process of law, supremacy of Parliament—all this is not enough in itself. It only *seems* enough in the first idyllic weeks after the Fascists have been thrown out.

If Europe knew what England stands for as clearly as it knows what Russia stands for, a synthesis of two worlds which *need* not be mutually exclusive would be very much closer than unhappily seems to be the case to-day.

INTO GERMANY

WHEN I landed at Stalingrad on solid ice, in a temperature of 12° below, a howling gale was blowing off the Khirgiz Steppe, across the Volga. It was like a razor being whittled across the cheeks, they having no soap on them. Another Douglas was lying on the snow upside down and burnt out, with its back broken. Nobody would say how it had happened. But a gloom had been cast in the wooden shack where sandwiches were being sold, at "Commercial" prices. I bought one for ten shillings. Amid the surrounding gloom of other passengers chewing on hunks of frozen black bread, my own depression deepened.

We flew on to Moscow high above the clouds, averaging 215 miles an hour and on the evening of January 9, 1945, I was back in the familiar atmosphere, with only a sun tan and some freckles to remind me that I had ever stepped out of these grey frozen streets and climbed above the oppressive ceiling of snow. But there was a difference. Half the furniture in my room had gone; the sofa had vanished, even the chandelier. In Teheran my friends had advised me to stay because the arrival of three high N.K.V.D. officers in the Ritz Hotel and the presence of Russian signallers erecting wires in the street had led to the supposition that another Teheran conference between Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill was imminent. But here in Moscow the disappearance of furniture from many other rooms besides my own led much more conclusively to the assumption that the conference would be in Russia. Not in Moscow but in the milder south whither the three elderly statesmen could travel without endangering their health.

Bets were being taken on the *locale*. I guessed the Crimea, because I knew that Simferopol and Sebastopol both had airfields capable of taking the biggest aircraft. Few of the palaces there had any furniture left and it was an index of the general poverty of domestic comforts that all the hotels of Moscow had to contribute furniture to be sent to Yalta. Half a dozen trainloads of bedding, food and liquor, accompanied by maids and waiters from Moscow, were sent down to serve the thousand-odd people who were to

attend the conference. The best cars from the Kremlin garage were loaded on to flat-cars and taken down south. While I was in Egypt, the whole caravanserai set off for the Caucasus, ostensibly to "open a new hotel." A few weeks later they returned to Moscow. The plans for the conference had been changed. But there could be no doubt that the Big Three were going to meet, and that soon.

In this penultimate period of the war not only Roosevelt and Churchill made the pilgrimage to Russia but many lesser fry as well. Just before, and during the great winter offensive which carried the Red Army from the Vistula to Berlin, there was such an influx of visitors that no one could doubt that the diplomatic capital of the continent, once in Berlin and before that in Paris, had shifted to the shabby but vital city on the Moskva. General de Gaulle arrived. Then came a British parliamentary delegation headed by Walter Elliot. Then the Hungarian armistice delegation. Then Secretary of State Stettinius. Then President Benes and the provisional government of Czechoslovakia. Then Marshal Tito and Foreign Minister Subasich. Then Mrs. Winston Churchill, who toured the country from Leningrad to the Caucasus in a special train. Next the provisional government of Poland.

De Gaulle went for a ride in the Metro, complaining that nobody recognised him and nobody cheered. He went to Mass in the Catholic Church which I always called "Notre Dame de Lubianka" because of the way it nestles behind the famous prison of that name, and I wonder if he appreciated the transformation in that little church which his presence caused? The bars on its windows had not been so effective in keeping malefactors out as those on the Lubianka had been in keeping them in; with the result that some of its plate had been stolen. And its roof let in the rain. Its American padre, Father Braun, told the Foreign Office that de Gaulle was coming and at once a small army of decorators arrived in the neglected place. They patched and painted it like new and even produced a set of altar vessels to replace the ones that had been stolen.

All these important people were received with bands, flags, guards of honour, state banquets and state visits to the old Imperial Box at the Opera. In the diplomatic world there was a cocktail party or a buffet supper almost every evening. And the grand old traditional Russian hospitality was lavishly laid on. But all this was just froth on top of a bubbling cauldron in which the basic

ingredients were the phenomenal strength of the Red Army and the great industries beyond the Urals.

During 1944 Russia was producing more war materials than Germany and her occupied satellites. The tank plants of the Sverdlovsk region, for example, fulfilled their quota in 1944 and had delivered over and above that tanks to the value of 300,000,000 roubles. A Russian tank costs about 50,000 roubles, therefore this Sverdlovsk area alone must have produced an excess of some 6000 tanks above the plan. The same region produced during 1944 40 per cent more ammunition than in 1943 and 18 times as many artillery shells which helped to explain why there had never been a shell famine on the eastern front, despite the lavish way in which the Red Army uses its artillery.

Most of this excess production was really a gift to the High Command who could not have counted on it when planning the winter offensive; it came in during the last months of 1944, that is to say during the four months of apparent lull from the end of September when Rokossovsky had taken Praga and Koniev won the Sandomir bridgehead across the Vistula. This was the period when some people abroad were asking why the Russians had not taken Warsaw.

At that moment it would have been hard to say whether the British or Russian people required and deserved an end to the war the most. At Stalingrad I had seen the great tractor plant belching out smoke once more but the city—the No. 1 Reconstruction project in the U.S.S.R.—was still a scene of devastation two years after the battle had ended. Total war and total reconstruction could not proceed simultaneously and so long as the war lasted the country's crying need, the rebuilding of her shattered cities and the provision of decent shelter for her people, had to lag. Two and a half months before, Stalin and Churchill, in Moscow, had put the last touches to the master plan for final victory. Rokossovsky, Zhukhov and Koniev were all set in Poland: Eisenhower was to be ready in the new year. There was to be one final, smashing, simultaneous break-through instead of the see-sawing of effort first in the East, then the West, which the Germans must have hoped for.

Then came Rundstedt's preventive offensive in the West, very much like the one the Germans delivered at Orel in the summer of 1943, except that it came much closer to success. And at this moment the Germans at Budapest were throwing everything into another delaying action, reckoning that if they could force the

Russians to pour more troops in there they would take some of the weight off the steam-roller that stood poised along the Vistula. The crafty German scheme to prolong the war militarily in the hope of splitting the Allies politically throbbed like an evil wisdom tooth in the head. The universal longing to be spared a seventh winter of war was being skilfully played upon by the Germans. The American Army and Navy Journal suggested that Rundstedt's offensive was possible because the Red Army was "inactive." Palpably absurd. *Red Star* returned the compliment by declaring that the Germans had brought troops into Hungary from Holland. We had to admit that our master plan had been knocked askew and that a new one was needed. Hence the urgent need for another meeting of the Big Three.

What struck me first as I looked at Moscow again with refreshed eyes was the fact that inflation was being beaten. Simple facts like the price of sugar and vegetables showed, more clearly than any stock exchange index, how the rouble was climbing back to internal stability. A year earlier I had had to give a porter 100 roubles on arrival: this time he was satisfied with 50 roubles. A year ago people for small services preferred to accept food rather than money. Now people definitely preferred the rouble. Sugar was one-third the price it was a year before, butter also one-third, potatoes which would normally be dearer now than in the autumn, were just half the price—1s. 8d. a lb. on the open market and off the ration. The commercial shops had mopped up all the surplus buying power with the result that, as productive facilities were freed at the end of the war, these shops aimed to re-stock and sell again at lower prices within the reach of the public, whose fewer roubles generally bought twice as much on the peasants' food market as they did a year before.

Before dawn on January 12th thousands of guns massed densely along a front of 25 miles on the Sandomir bridgehead put over a barrage which was heard in Lublin, 60 miles away. The final offensive which was to carry the Red Army 350 miles from here to the Oder and then into Berlin, whose capitulation was offered on May Day, had begun.

In many places the artillery opened up only 900 yards from the enemy's front line in which Germans were soon found semi-conscious, without a scratch on them but with blood running from ears and noses, having fainted from the blast of the concentrated

cannonade. Between dawn and noon the Russians advanced three miles. The main defences were further back and it was not until the afternoon that these were sufficiently softened by the artillery to permit the infantry to go in. Guardsmen under General Bականov who won battle honours at Stalingrad were given the place of honour and made the first break-through. Then came tank brigades under Generals Kuznetsov and Poluboyarov. Anticipating heavy snow, all the tanks had been painted white. Lines of them stretched like white ribands across the dun fields, only spotted here and there with snow.

It struck me that when "Monty" got the full report on Koniev's break-through he would be delighted with it for some of his deception schemes were extraordinarily like the ones we saw at Alamein. The Sandomir bridgehead was not very large and the Germans knew what to expect, but they seemed to have been completely deceived as to just where the big punch was to be laid on.

For weeks beforehand troops crossed the Vistula at night and were hidden in underground assembly-points in the woods. Tank tracks were built, named and numbered like the "Sun," "Moon" and "Top Hat" tracks at Alamein and each tank unit had a code name and number corresponding to the track up which it was to move. Hundreds of dummy guns were massed in the wrong places. These flashed and smoked just like the real thing. Hundreds of dummy tanks trundled about at night while monster gramophones broadcast the sound of great tank formations rumbling forward. Noisy "Stalinets" tractors burred about in misleading locations with the result that the Germans massed their reserves in the wrong places.

The break-through was achieved without any air support at all; solely by artillery. The weather was not suitable for flying. The Germans' hedgehog defence system proved an utter failure. For the first time in the East their gun positions were surrounded by barbed wire and small minefields. The first line trenches were not heavily defended for fear of the Russian barrage. Men were not stretched the whole way along a trench but rather in small groups, sheltered under concrete. Out of 4 or 5 lines of trenches the main hedgehog was located as far back as the third or fourth trench. The needles of the hedgehog—the small groups in the intervening trenches—were supposed to stay behind after the Russians had broken through and cut them off, while from the main hedgehog issued powerful counter-attacks. But these needles

only pricked and the main body failed to deliver the expected punch. Then when the Germans tried to withdraw, they were isolated by their own minefields. The hedgehog system had been definitely overdone; the Germans had outsmarted themselves.

The first shock over, the Germans began to retreat from Sandomir with sufficient deliberation to mine and booby-trap extensively. On one cottage table even a piece of bacon, temptingly exposed, had a booby-trap beneath the plate. Sacks of flour were mined. Pillows were liable to explode and there were bicycles which blew up if you touched them. Wells had been poisoned.

On the second day Koniev mastered heavy counter-attacks. On one sector 300 German tanks and Ferdinands held up the advance. They were engaged by Russian anti-tank guns who were hard pressed until after an uneasy night a tank brigade came to their aid at dawn. The German panzers then retired, leaving 116 smashed tanks and 2000 corpses on the field.

It soon became evident that the offensive was aimed not merely at Cracow but upon an ever-broadening front towards the rich industrial region of Silesia.

"On to Berlin!" cried Ilva Ehrenbourg, the Red Army's literary paladin, in *Pravda*. And he added that Germany's attempt to divide the Allies was being answered in the only way the Germans could understand. Rundstedt's offensive in the West he described as an attempt to gain a separate peace, as the German-inspired articles in the Spanish Press showed.

"In vain in the Madrid bordello were the chaise-longues wheeled out for a new Munich," said Ehrenbourg (in a sentence I would have liked to have written myself). "We are proud of our Allies and though we look at the world differently, we all agree on love of peace and hatred of war and its perpetrators, the Nazi bandits. The member of a conservative club in Coventry easily comes to terms with the Komsomol lad from Smolensk when it comes to punishing these murderers."

By January 17th Marshals Zhukhov and Koniev were sweeping forward on a front 160 miles long: the advance tanks were 12 miles from Cracow and only 30 from the frontier of Germany. Zhukhov's right flank was secured, 20 miles south-west of Warsaw, by Soviet and Polish troops who were preparing to enter the city and the whole German defensive position in southern Poland had been overthrown by such a weight of men and material as the Germans had never faced before. Zhukhov had annihilated 4 divisions in

breaking through and 2 more in the fighting for Radom. Two more were cut off near Kielce. All records for World War II were being broken. Greater numbers of men were moving faster and further than in the German blitzkrieg against France. Not a day of those four months of waiting on the Vistula had been wasted. Whilst Malinovsky and Tolbuchin were conducting a major campaign in Hungary nothing was being diverted thither, as the Germans had hoped. Trucks by the score of thousand were rolling into Poland to make the whole army capable of moving at speeds at which only the spearheads had moved before and to take full advantage of the good roads ahead. The chief of the American military mission had estimated that 50 per cent of the trucks used by the Red Army in its 1944 summer offensive had been supplied by lend-lease, but I would have said that the proportion was now smaller. For with trucks as with everything else, the Russians had been very busy since they reached the Vistula last August. They still used the two-horsed "Tachanka" where the terrain favoured but no longer were they obliged to use horse transport where vehicles were more appropriate.

Despite its grievous casualties the Red Army was now far stronger, qualitatively as quantitatively, than in the first days of the war.

The Russians are surprisingly frank about the mistakes the Red Army made at the beginning; on the stage you can see plays which point out deficiencies in the command. Some young officers had romantic, unrealistic ideas about the war and some generals lived on their memories of the civil war. Now some of these young officers were generals themselves. Their military art had been acquired in the hardest of all schools. The German Army began the war as a perfected machine which in 1940 and 1941 knew all the answers—the Red Army as a citizen army not too proud to learn from an enemy, who since Stalingrad, however, had nothing new to teach.

The campaign was moving too fast to be "covered" in the usual way. The war correspondent, 880 miles from Czestochowa and writing his dispatch on material available in the morning or early afternoon, found himself, by 8 o'clock, when the first salute of the evening boomed forth, running 50 miles or more behind events.

By January 20th, just 8 days after Koniev's guns began the offensive, five army groups were on the move. Guessing at the numbers arrayed against them, the Germans spoke of 175 divisions.

The total of generals under Cherniakovsky, Rokossovsky, Zhukhov, Koniev and Petrov was certainly not less than 150. Most of the cavalry were under Zhukhov's command where the flat plains of central Poland made them useful.

Two days later Rokossovsky had avenged the battle of Tannenberg where in August, 1914, Hindenburg defeated Samsonov's army with a loss to the Russians of 100,000 men. He swept up to Tannenberg by the same route Samsonov followed, but this time there was no German commander of genius to bar his way. The terrain on his front resembled a film by Eisenstein—a mackerel sky glowing with the flame of burning villages and snow stained with crimson and the black hulks of burned-out vehicles. Hitler had been forced out of “the Fuehrer's Headquarters” in East Prussia which had served him over two years. General Voeroes, who as chief of staff of the Hungarian Army had visited Hitler there as lately as September, 1944, told me, while waiting to sign the Hungarian armistice in Moscow, that the place was a wooden barracks with concrete shelters hidden in a wood 42 miles from the frontier of East Prussia.

Between Cherniakovsky and Rokossovsky, the slaughter in East Prussia was on the scale of Tamburlaine. Quarter was not sought and few prisoners were taken. As the Russians put it: “The Fritzes are fighting like madmen for every metre of their own soil.” It was pretty terrible to hear the B.B.C. strategists offering uncalled-for apologies for the fact that the British and Americans were not advancing through the snow, while the Russians were: such excuses as “the snow is hard in the East but soft in the West” sounded both soft and slushy as they came off the Russian air. And off the air in Holland, surely, too?

Those who had been worrying about how “millions of Germans” could be moved from East Prussia so that the land might go to Poland could now note that the Germans were solving the problem for us themselves. Apart from Koenigsberg, into which some 200,000 civilians had fled, the villages and towns of East Prussia were yielding up only German cats and dogs. The monolithic Tannenberg monument had been blown up and the bodies of Hindenburg and his wife removed. Up to January 24th not a single German civilian had been encountered, although the Red Army was then deep inside East Prussia and Silesia. The first villages in Silesia had been burned by the Germans. The wells had been poisoned.

One dear little red-roofed cottage that might have belonged to Hansel and Gretel had a meal laid in its neat parlour. A grandfather clock tick-tocked. There were flower-pots on the sill. But this was a witches' cottage. A Soviet doctor analysed the beef and bacon, the cucumbers and schnapps on that white napery and found that all were poisoned. The Soviet soldiery wanted to burn the cottage down after this but the colonel of the regiment, coming up at that moment, ordered that everything be left as it was with a sign "Poisoned" stuck on the table. A Soviet soldier scribbled on the sign "Let Hitler choke on this" before the motor-cyclists remounted and pressed on to the west.

On January 25th, Breslau, the first great German city to be threatened with the same fate as Stalingrad, came under shellfire from its south-eastern suburbs. Next day the first recorded meeting took place between a Red Army soldier and a German civilian. This was on the banks of the Oder. When artillery Major Hudienko entered a house in the village his men had just occupied he found that the owner had remained behind.

"He was all of a tremble and in a servile way offered me a wash and something to eat," was the way Hudienko put it. "I turned right around and left the house without speaking to him. I'm not fighting German civilians though I hate them as much as the soldiers. I just can't have any dealings with them, that's all."

Hudienko's entire family had been killed by the Germans at Konotop, in the Ukraine.

About this time Ehrenbourg's campaign against the German as an individual was at its height—and immensely popular it was among the ordinary soldiers. Ehrenbourg wrote: "We come to Germany not as educators but as animal-trainers, for the Germans are incorrigible." Ehrenbourg's rôle always reminded me of that of the late Horatio Bottomley in England in the last war. In the end, he carried it too far and his policy was repudiated publicly by Alexandrov, the Party's expert on propaganda, because the Germans were using Ehrenbourg's philippics to stimulate resistance among soldiers who should have been ripe for surrender. But until the Russians actually entered Germany Ehrenbourg's work boosted morale among the Red Army more powerfully than anything else and fully merited the Order of Lenin with which Stalin rewarded him.

Just at this time there was a striking emphasis in the Soviet Press on the theme that in two weeks of this offensive some verdicts

of history many centuries old had been reversed. Less than one-sixth of East Prussia was now under German control and this land, won by the Teutonic Knights—the “cur knights” as the Russians always call them—will not be German again.

In winning territory up to the Oder which is to form part of the new Polish republic the Russians consider that they have reversed the lifework of Frederick the Great. The cartoonists and writers of popular verse delighted in making derisive references to him. To the Russians the victories of the five armies seemed much more than just further steps towards the final overthrow of the Nazi régime. They regarded them as the final liquidation of that Teutonic military power which for centuries dominated East Prussia, Pomorze, Poznan and Upper Silesia. The Russians and Poles, too, seemed determined that never again should these lands be the jumping-off places for aggression against the Slav peoples of Europe not merely by “Hitlerite Bands,” as they are called, but by any Germanic régime dominated, as in the past, by Prussia.

The great advance had had such a tonic effect upon the whole Russian people that it almost seemed as though the national temperament had changed. People smiled more. Even old people, who had so many sorrows to remember, looked confident and jolly. It was not because life was easier and food a little more plentiful but because the long desecration of war had been removed from Russian soil and because from now on all the destruction and misery would fall exclusively upon the German people who started it all.

There were now more than 7000 Heroes of the Soviet Union. Only the United States Army had been more lavish with ribbons. But I could not detect any militaristic vainglory among the people: on the contrary, there was a healthy distrust of excessive *panache* and among the young generation the metallic chest of the seasoned warrior, tinkling with decorations, became known as the “iconostasis.”

Each night, when the Victory Orders were read, we were reminded of what all the glory had cost. The voice of Lauri Levitan, the brazen-tongued announcer who had read so many Stalin orders that children used to think his was the voice of the Marshal himself, always dropped a tone when he reached the words—“*Vechnaya slava geroyam*” (“Eternal glory to the heroes”). Only once in my time in Russia had I met a Russian who had not had

at least one relative killed, wounded or missing at the front. And she was an orphan.

The old waiter who served us each day—we called him “Alexander Nevsky” because of his dashing air—had been pretty merry a year before when one of his three sons at the front was made an officer. But last year two of them were killed. And just as the Oder was reached he heard that his last boy, the youngest, fell in the fighting in Budapest. The longer the Germans prolonged the struggle the more bitter became the feelings against them of old waiters like Alexander and old peasant women whose sons would yet be killed because the Hunnish herd went on obeying Hitler’s order not to surrender.

I read the order which the High Command published for the information of officers appointed to administer occupied territory with the greatest interest. “The Red Army,” said this order, “does not violate the sovereignty of the countries in which it operates (this applied mainly to Poland) but all citizens must give facilities needed for continuing operations against the enemy. With a firm hand the Russian military commandant in each town and village must ensure this.” The order recalled that in the Russian Army the tradition had always been to appoint as town commandant the officer or general who most distinguished himself in its capture. Thus Suvorov appointed Kutuzov commandant of Ismail after he had seized it from the Turks.

“The post of commandant should be regarded as a high honour. The commandant must maintain strict discipline, safeguard all property, ensure our men good living conditions, take from the population at once radio transmitters and receivers so that enemy agents cannot use them, register the whole population. The commandant must realise that when the battle for the town ends, the battle for him begins. The town must be de-mined at once. Sentries must be well posted. Camouflage must be strictly attended to. The commandant must make it impossible for enemy agents to be active.”

The policy was to register all Germans first, arrest all Nazis until their individual cases could be gone into; then put the inhabitants to work cleaning up the town, which gave them the right to draw food from the bakeries and grocers which were opened under Russian supervision. The Germans were left to feed themselves, after the Red Army had commandeered what stocks it

needed. There was absolutely no interference with private trade; on the contrary, the Russians did not mind how the Germans kept themselves alive, so long as they did not get in the way of the advance. The one exception was the children. The Red Army did not visit the sins of the fathers upon them, and where parents were not able to feed their children, the Russian Commandant would make provision for them.

Some of the "military commentators" in the West were writing such tactless and tasteless pieces at this time that I was moved to telegraph a letter to my friend Alan Moorehead which was published in the *Daily Express*.

"How is it possible?" I asked him, "that this offensive, and its success, has come as such a shock to so many people. Who in particular are these military experts who were hinting a month ago that it was time the Russians opened a second front and now seem to be thinking up smarter excuses than Goebbels for the failure of the German Army until one Russian paper comments—'When Berlin falls these people will doubtless write, "By their successful withdrawal from the capital the Germans have deprived the Russians of victory."' Who pays these guys, and why? How is it possible they've not been fired long ago, as you or I would deservedly have been, if we had written such stuff? I suppose the truth is that the Red Army is so good some people still think it is too good to be true. After all, many people alive to-day were weaned on bad news and have been expecting the worst ever since. Hitler has been 12 years in power. It is difficult to believe the simple truth, which is that his end is now really close. Unlike Napoleon, Hitler is facing his Waterloo in the East, not in the West. Waterloo opened a new era in the history of Europe and to-day's battles in Pomerania, Brandenburg and Silesia are opening a new era too in which, as Churchill said, we are witnessing the emergence of Russia for the first time in history as the greatest power on our continent. What an ally it is we have here in the East! And how grateful we should be not only to those who planned the Second Front but to those who believed in it and agitated for it incessantly long before it seemed feasible and fashionable, at a time when those super-cautious, over-wise old owls who never from the beginning understood the nature of this war against Fascism, were still saying—'It will cost too many lives. . . . why not invest our strength in Italy or the Balkans? . . .

what about "Victory through Airpower?" . . . saying in short, "Isn't there some way in which we can avoid fighting a real European war at all?"' Then, later, spreading that insult to the British soldier—"The Germans would rather surrender to the Western allies than to the Russians.' What would the situation be to-day if we had listened to these polite defeatists! We 'always win the last battle.' But if we had believed these people we might have arrived on the field after the last battle had been fought."

Then I recalled the words of the late General Wingate, when, two years earlier, he was marching to the Chindwin and I was walking beside him: "In relation to our allies, we are again the small company of adventurers we were in the time of Queen Elizabeth, so it's altogether timely that we should demonstrate anew the qualities we possessed in that, our Golden Age. It's highly important for the making of the peace that the British race should prove itself a race of supreme fighters. For England's sake there must be a second front in Europe and for England's sake it should be soon."

On January 30th a report from Marshal Zhukhov's headquarters disclosed that his tanks had already passed mile-posts which read—90 miles to Berlin. "At every stop," it added, "our men pull out their maps and work out the latest distance to the lair of the Fascist Beast."

The staff officers added the map of Berlin to their working list. They knew it thoroughly, though they had not had it in their map cases before. In the cellars of Stalingrad, on the Volga steppe, in the orchards of Orel, they used to take it out and study it with loving anticipation. And now they were working on that very grid at last. The tank units of General Tiliakov, now in Pomerania, had advanced 310 miles in two weeks. With such speed, the Russians were only beginning to take stock of their gains. The first dazzling gain to be established was that the greater part of Upper Silesia had been captured absolutely intact. The great industrial cities of Gleiwitz, Hindenburg, Beuthen in Germany and Katowice and Sosnowiece in Poland were absolutely unharmed. Factories were still in production, railways and power systems were working; coal mines had not been touched. The textile mills of Lodz were unharmed and in Cracow hardly a brick was out of place. The lack of strategic bombing on the Eastern front might have cost lives but it certainly paid a dividend in enemy plant and stores

taken intact. The Red Army was advancing with the aid of railways and dumps which on the western front would have been destroyed by our heavy bombers. General Winter, too, was fighting for Russia. The weather was much worse inside Germany than in Poland or the U.S.S.R. While Berlin was experiencing 30 degrees below zero Centigrade and the refugees were suffering from frost-bite, in Moscow it was not more than 12 degrees below zero. At the crossing of the River Warthe, the Russians had to "grow ice" because the frozen river was not hard enough. They poured on water at night until the ice was thick enough to bear the weight of the tanks.

In just 24 days Cherniakovsky, Rokossovsky, Koniev and Zhukhov alone had overrun an area normally inhabited by something like 22 million people and so, in early February, there was an operative pause. But it lasted no more than a week. On February 7th Lieut.-General Rodimtsev, whose Guards division had held the very last houses at Stalingrad against the Germans, was the first to cross the Oder in Koniev's new break-through. On a wall in Stalingrad there is a plaque which reads: "Here stood to the death the guardsmen of Rodimtsev." Only 200 yards remained between them and the Volga, which was all the Germans needed to become masters of Stalingrad. Rodimtsev, then a colonel, 37 years of age, had his H.Q. in a shattered sewage pipe. The three regiments of his newly-formed division crossed the Oder with the standards they had won at Stalingrad. They also carried three special crimson banners to hoist over Berlin on the day of victory.

Events now crowded upon one another so thickly that when I look at my diary I find little except the daily record of so many thousands of words dispatched with occasional entries such as "out ski-ing on Lenin Hills" or "James Aldridge gives me the MS. of his new book, *Of Many Men* to read." It was immensely hard work. You hardly dared stray away from your radio lest some bombshell escape you. Budapest fell on February 13th, opening the road to Vienna. The longest battle for any city in this war, and after Stalingrad the most savage, it rated only a few paragraphs in the British Press, so great was the pressure of news. The Crimea Conference came and went, affecting us scarcely at all, for there was not an Allied correspondent permitted within hundreds of miles of the scene; nor was this merely a Russian proviso. Churchill and Roosevelt had become as allergic to the Press on these occasions as Stalin; both liked to do their own reporting, in their own way.

I question whether there will be any more of these Big Three meetings, after the war. The atmosphere in which they are held is not particularly healthy and I doubt whether the British or American public would stand for all the secrecy, junketting and nepotism, once the wartime urgency is gone. Roosevelt brought his daughter, Churchill brought Mrs. Vic Oliver, and Ambassador Harriman brought his daughter Kathy, a photogenic young woman who saw to it that flowers were put in people's bedrooms and at one of the many dinner parties drank a toast to Marshal Stalin herself, in a Russian formula which did her teacher credit. But what these young ladies had to contribute to the high purposes of the conference was not immediately apparent. Marshal Stalin, as might be supposed, brought no female entourage and the minimum of staff and exerted pressure to get through with the business as soon as possible.

One who was present at all the big meetings told me: "Stalin spoke little. But Churchill and Roosevelt put a tax on their interpreters."

Maisky did the translating for Stalin. His English is far from perfect. But Stalin evidently liked to have his advice constantly on tap and at these conferences no contact is so intimate as that between any one of the Big Three and his interpreter. Maisky put in a report on Reparation due to Russia, and this was adopted as a master plan for the inter-allied Commission to work on when it met in Moscow. Both Winston and F. D. R. looked over the ruins of Sebastopol. Russian officers wanted to show Winston the battlefields of this war which I describe earlier in this book, but characteristically Winston insisted on going over the Crimean War battlefields, especially Balaclava. He walked over the plain on which the Light Brigade had charged the Russian guns and rather mystified the Russians by recalling the part which his old Hussar regiment had played in this stirring event.

Although the pæans of thanksgiving which went up from some British and American papers over the so-called "solution" of the Polish question were soon shown to have no solid basis, there *was* a remarkably warm engendering of friendship between the leaders. At one of the two dinners which Stalin gave he raised his glass to Churchill, "the man who stood alone in 1940, when all the world was knocked flat.

"We shall never forget that in 1940 only one opponent stood erect against the Nazi horror." There was a widespread feeling

in London that the Russians had never appreciated fully our services before June, 1941, and so Churchill was very touched. Tears came into his eyes. He looked down at his plate. Then he got up and said, awkwardly, just five words: "I am very much moved."

Amid the florid oratory of most Russian banquets, Stalin's toasts often strike a human note. When President Benes and his government were being entertained in the Kremlin a Czech general toasted the Red Army in the customary grandiose style—"the glorious army of Liberators, pride of the Soviet Motherland," and so on. But Stalin got up quickly and interpolated: "No, not a glorious army of heroes . . . just an army of Soviet citizens, tired, weary of war after the death of millions of their best . . . an army that is far from perfect, which has all the faults that flesh is heir to and which we ask our friends to tolerate and understand when it goes into their countries, in pursuit of the enemy. An army of ordinary Russian men and women, please—we do not claim that it is anything more."

On March 12th the Russians having deepened their bridgehead over the Oder beyond Kustrin until there was 310 miles between them and the Allies in the West, had approached close enough to Berlin to hear the Allied bombs falling upon the city and to see the Flying Fortresses in huge formations approaching Berlin from the east. By night, our Mosquitoes used to wheel over the Russian positions on the Oder before going in to do their runs over the city. On March 24 the Allies went over the Rhine in their final push and from that moment the locomotive of history ran as fast as it conceivably could without leaving the rails. The death of Marshal Shaposhnikov and his burial in Red Square, Russia's denunciation of her pact of neutrality with Japan, the death of Franklin Roosevelt, the San Francisco Conference, the Red Army's entry into Berlin on April 22, the link-up with the Americans near Torgau on the Elbe three days later, the peace overture by Himmler, the execution of Mussolini and the reported death of Hitler within three days of each other, Stalin's victory parade on May Day in Red Square, the surrender in northern Italy, and the final surrender ceremonies at Rheims and Berlin—all this added up to the most intensely-lived six weeks that I expect to go through in my lifetime.

I saw Stalin carry the urn of Shaposhnikov and place it in the Kremlin wall, I heard Molotov and Mikoyan and the chief of the Soviet General Staff sing "Onward Christian Soldiers" at Roose-

velt's memorial service in the American Embassy, I was the guest of Marshal Tito in the Yugoslav Embassy and heard Marshal Budienny exclaim: "The news from the front gets better and better—I shall soon be unemployed. . . ." I was in the Kremlin for a meeting of the Supreme Soviet when the news came that the armies of Koniev and Zhukhov had encircled Berlin.

It was interesting to note that the palaces and churches in the Kremlin were just as badly in need of paint as the rest of Moscow. But the great St. Andrew's Hall where the Soviet met was bathed in light and colour, like a super-cinema. By far the largest parliament in the world, it is not built for the cut and thrust of debate which, in any case, does not arise under the Soviet system. It looks, and is, far more like an American convention than a legislative assembly. More than a thousand deputies are seated on the floor—many of them from Asiatic Russia, in their native dress. The balcony for guests holds as many again. On the floor above there is a large refreshment room. No alcohol heats the passions of these legislators. Lemonade is served, and it is "on the house." But a buzz of excitement went around when the news came from Berlin. The most striking person there was an erect old lady with white hair, over eighty years of age, talking with a white-moustached general who had been a Tsarist officer in his youth. She was Lenin's private secretary, Stassova. What triumphant memories the old lady must have nourished! She had been at Lenin's side when the painful peace of Brest-Litovsk was signed with Germany. And she had lived to see the Red Army hold Berlin in a vice and cross the Elbe.

On a pearly spring evening, on April 27, the news of the link-up at Torgau was broadcast and for the first time Stalin addressed an Order of the Day in honour of Allied troops, as well as the Red Army. A special aircraft flew in from London with the recording of a speech by Churchill which was put over, in English and Russian, on a great hook-up that stretched not only from Lvov to Vladivostock but that was heard also by the Red Army in the field, in Austria, Poland and in Germany itself. "God Save the King" was played through twice, very slowly and solemnly, after Churchill had finished.

May Day, 1945.

This is what 190 million Russians have been waiting for, for nearly four years. The Victory Parade in Red Square. The war is virtually over. And for the Russians there will be no Japanese war to follow, at least for a considerable time. For them this is really the end. If they were to fight Japan now they would have to bear the brunt of the war in the East, as they bore the brunt of the European war. No one should expect them to do that. But once the Americans have deployed an army on the Asiatic mainland—made it certain that the Red Army would not have to take the full weight of the Japanese Army in Manchuria and in China—the Russians are likely to come in. Certainly, the only miserable-looking person in Red Square to-day is the Japanese ambassador. . . .

Stalin stands on the Lenin Mausoleum flanked by the Committee of National Defence and by Voroshilov, Budienny, Novikov and others of his marshals. I have a place at the foot of the tomb. In the stands I counted over 200 generals and admirals—the latter in new caps with a gold strap across rather like the United States Navy. The generals are wearing a parade belt made of silver thread for the first time.

Here is one thing in which the Russians are just like the English—they love a parade and know how to contrive a pageant rich in colour and ceremonial. All the tanks and guns to-day are brand-new. But the splendour of the day lies in its ancient ceremonial—the beautifully matched horses, the scarlet and gold banners, the trumpeters with crimson tabards hanging from their silver instruments. On the buildings opposite hang three enormous banners bearing the image of Lenin and Stalin and with these words emblazoned on scarlet bunting 60 feet long: "Long live the first of May, day of reviewing the Workers' fighting strength! Workers of all lands, unite in the struggle for the complete rout of Hitlerite Germany!"

Before me stands Litvinov in black and gold diplomatic uniform and white gloves. To my right the diplomatic corps, some in top-hats and morning coats, others in full dress with feathered cocked hats and swords. And who is this in the front row, between General Catroux the French Ambassador and the red-tarbooshed Egyptian Minister? A shrunken figure of a man once big, with wan complexion and with those sunken eyes that look almost blind, that

I've seen so often among those who have been locked up by the Nazis. It is Edouard Herriot, once prime minister of France, flown straight to Moscow from his prison near Berlin. He does not smile. But his ravaged face is most eloquent. Blinking like a man long in darkness, he gazes up at the gorgeous spring sky filled with red-starred aircraft. He draws himself up proudly and squares his shoulders again, after five long years. His eyes are moist.

At 9.55 a.m. Stalin mounts the mausoleum. Next to me two little girls in Scots plaids and a little negro child wave their hands and shrilly cry, "Hooray for Comrade Stalin," and one of them drops her ice-cream cone in her excitement. Stalin looks round and smiles.

As the Kremlin clock chimes to the commandant of the Moscow garrison, General Artemiev, canters on to the square, where the troops are drawn up in their thousands, a scarlet banner before each detachment. Simultaneously, the chief of the general staff, General Antonov, who is Stalin's right-hand man, trots out of the Spassky gate of the Kremlin on a chestnut and meets General Artemiev in the middle of the square. Then as the band plays a lively march the two generals canter around, halting before each unit and saying, "Greetings to you all upon the holiday," to which the soldiers respond with a loud Hurrah in the old style. The two generals ride out of the square to visit other units drawn up outside, waiting their turn to enter. Then Antonov rides back, dismounts before the tomb and mounts the tribune to make a short speech, in which the chief point for us is his reference to "the isolation of Japan." As he utters the last word which, as might be expected, is "Stalin" the massed bands of 500 musicians break into the national anthem and a Moscow salute booms forth from artillery all over the city. The timing of this, and of the complex parade which follows, is perfect. The last salvo is fired as the last note of the anthem dies away. Then the trumpets sound and the march past begins.

First come units from the various military academies led by their generals with sabres drawn and with the colours borne before each. Marching 24 abreast the soldiers, all officers, swing their arms widely across the body in the Russian style. They bear no arms. Then come the Naval Academy students behind their white and blue standard with the red star in the corner. Besides Soviet marches, the band plays old favourites dating back to the days of the Empress Catherine and before, including the tune to which the

Preobrazhensky guards used to march. The cavalry schools go by with sabres drawn. Then comes a forest of bayonets—the N.K.V.D. troops with their blue caps and the Frontier Guards with the green. Infantry regiments in active service dress come next in tin hats with red stars on them, then lads of 14 and 15 in blue and red and white gloves—the boys from the Suvorov military schools. Next in fighting dress come sappers bearing de-mining equipment and cycle troops wheeling their machines.

At 10.55 the bands march aside and the mass parade begins. A dancing cavalry march is played and the cavalry appear riding 20 abreast led by two generals and a cornet bearing a huge scarlet banner. The officers ride white horses with blue silk bridles and magnificent red and blue saddle cloths with the red star emblazoned on them. The animals are all perfectly matched, even down to their white noses. Here are anti-tank guns drawn by bay horses and machine-guns on light limbers. Here are the lorried infantry, four trucks abreast, the vehicles all Russian led by a Russian-type jeep carrying generals and a single jeep with a standard floating from it. Here are tommy-gunners, 16 in each vehicle, drawing 76-millimetre anti-tank guns behind them. Here are American trucks led by American jeeps—you can see the U.S.A. still painted on them—hauling 105 mm. guns. Now Russian trucks hauling howitzers. Here comes the pride of the Red Army, an immense display of artillery of every kind, all highly mobile and some of enormous size, whirling by at 30 miles an hour. Here are very heavy ack-ack weapons mounted on trucks; searchlights and sound-detectors similarly mounted and Guards units with their famous "Katusha" rocket projectors. Here are 205 mm. monsters on tractors, hauled by other tractors and some huge siege mortars which look over 300 mm. and rattle the paving-stones of the Red Square. Finally some siege weapons that look like 15-inch naval guns, all mobile and with huge platforms to mount them trailing behind.

At 11.25 the first tank sweeps in with colours flying from its turret and simultaneously a 4-motored Russian bomber leads in a mass of aircraft over the square. In a cloudless heaven, electric blue, bombers and fighters drone over in formations of 80 at a time, while on the ground the air thickens into a matching, hazy blue as hundreds of armoured vehicles rumble past five abreast, at 20 miles an hour, drowning out the music of the bands. I admire the courage of officers who stood in the middle of the square

directing with red flags the hurtling masses of metal into the appropriate tracks.

There may have been bigger May Day parades. But none was ever so gay and glorious. And as the glittering generals broke up into chatting groups, after the last tank had gone and Stalin had walked back into the Kremlin, I thought of another Russian general, one of the heroes of the defence of Moscow, who might well have been there . . . but who was at that moment fighting the Germans near Prague under the most bizarre circumstances. The traitor General Vlashev, after serving Hitler for two years, was pursued by the Russians to the gates of Prague. Then, finding that the Germans stood between him and the presumptive safety of General Patton's army, he attacked the Germans in his haste to escape from the Red Army's vengeance.

That night the Kremlin was floodlit, its towers carrying illuminated red stars, while from the dome of the law courts an illuminated red flag floated all night; the curfew was abolished, fountains played in the central squares in which one could barely move for the throngs who strolled around listening to syncopated music which was broadcast all night. It was difficult to believe that the fighting was almost over, especially for queer fish like myself who had for over five years done nothing but look at the war and write about it. Idle to pretend that one did not feel the passing of this war as almost a personal loss . . . for so long had existence concentrated around it that now one wondered whether any purpose so compelling could be found in the balance of one's life. The fight against Fascism had simplified so many other things that would now become complex again.

We heard that the Left papers at home had printed pictures of the dead Mussolini and his "lubovnitsa," as the Russians delightfully called her, hanging by their heels while that sturdy bourgeois organ the *Daily Telegraph* portrayed him lying in all seemliness in his coffin. Little straws like these are not wasted on Russians. . . .

In Berlin the Red Army was celebrating May Day by capturing a large square in which a 10-ton R.A.F. bomb had made a crater 115 yards across and wiped off the face of the earth several complete city blocks, turning the area into a stone quarry. Had the Russians not found the street-sign under some rubble they would not have known what part of Berlin they were in. After firing field-guns down the tunnels of the Metro to break up concentrations of S.S.

troops trying to infiltrate into their rear, the Russians were attacked by others who came out of the sewers. It was the battle of Warsaw in reverse, with the Nazis as the sewer-rats. Grenades were thrown down the sewers, which were then blocked up with bomb rubble. And in once-fashionable quarters, German men and women came starving out of their cellars when the firing ceased and cut up the dead horses lying in the streets.

While Moscow was singing in the streets, the German radio announced the death of Hitler. But next morning, the tone of the Russian Press was flat disbelief. "A new Fascist trick . . . a device to enable Hitler to leave the stage and go underground" . . . it was said. And the whole event was dismissed in just 114 words, on the back page. The curious smoothness with which Hitler appointed Doenitz his successor on April 30th and then "died" fighting Bolshevism on May Day struck the average Russian as exceedingly suspicious; it would be easy for so commonplace a looking man as Hitler to go underground in Germany at this moment with a view to staging a Messianic "second coming" at a convenient time. . . .

The "V-Day in Europe" which Churchill announced at 4 p.m. Moscow time had dawned chill and rainy in Moscow. There were no celebrations whatever. It was just an ordinary working day. Between Moscow and London the cipher messages had been winging wildly in an effort to arrange a simultaneous announcement, but to no avail. We, in our anxiety to save lives, wanted to announce the cease fire as soon as possible. But the Russians, firm in the conviction that the German General Staff must be forced to acknowledge defeat by signing unconditional surrender in Berlin, would not announce the end until this final document had been signed. We did not know this at the time and so we hung over our radios hour after hour, far into the night, keeping a death watch over the expiring war.

A grotesque situation seemed to be developing when, with people dancing in the streets of London, Moscow was putting out news about further stiff fighting. But it was true enough. The news that Montgomery told some of the German generals who came to surrender to him that they should go back and surrender to the Russians created a good impression in Moscow. And one felt that if a like sense of proportion was displayed generally in the West the extraordinarily impudent attempts by the Germans even at their last gasp to register invidious distinctions between the

allies would fail. There was something rather undignified about the taking of 6 million prisoners in the West while the Russians were still fighting. The wild scramble among the Germans to flee from the Russians into the arms of the Allies would have been funny had it not been also a calculated insult to our own soldiers—based on the belief that we would give them softer treatment. As we heard over the home radio the ringing bells, the thanksgiving services, the empire-wide broadcasts, the unctuous or gleeful B.B.C. voices describing the wild rejoicing all over England, we wondered if the ordinary man at home still remembered that the Russian armies which had stood on the European continent almost four years were over three times the size of Eisenhower's whole force and that just half-way through, on the 2nd anniversary of their effort, they had officially lost 4,200,000 killed and missing?

Maddeningly, the Moscow radio made no mention of the end of the war but played operatic selections all through the evening. Just before 1 o'clock in the morning on May 9th the mocking laughter of the Devil's Serenade from *Faust* accorded so well with our mood that we concerted our derisive laughter with that of the radio. It seemed that the big news would never come. We telephoned the Press Department of the Foreign Office, whose chief said he "knew nothing." At last, at 2.10 a.m., the voice of Lauri Levitan announced the capitulation at Berlin. At once in the street we heard shouts of "Pobyeda!" (Victory) and voices began to sing Russia's "Land of Hope and Glory"—"How Wide is my Native Land." The Press Department—true to form up to the last moment of the Great Patriotic War—told a furious correspondent who complained that he had not been informed of the armistice: "We did not know that you were interested, otherwise we could have made arrangements to inform you." (After which it seemed that nothing more need be said as to the complete failure of the Soviet Government to understand the meaning of the words "propaganda" or "public relations" in the past four years.)

Thousands went to work that morning without knowing what had happened. They were told to go home and take a holiday. No formal parades or rejoicing had been arranged and at first it seemed that no one quite knew what to do. Then, suddenly, at noon, it all began. The people of Moscow took things into their own hands. Huge crowds swarmed into the centre of the city, halting all traffic. Children drove about in trucks waving red flags.

When I came off the Arctic convoy they had given me a "red duster," saying: "Wave this flag for the Merchant Navy in the Moscow Victory Parade." And now, 18 months later, my old red flag with the Union Jack quartered upon it, is the centre of an enormous throng of cheering Russians in the middle of Red Square. It all feels like the last scene of some well-contrived play, beautifully complete.

"Pobyeda!" they shout. "Long live the Allies!"

And I, sitting on top of a station wagon, am calling "Hurrah for the Red Army!" and fifteen children have scrambled on to the roof with me and a Red Army major is sitting on the bonnet singing "Tipperary," and in front of the car three girls are twanging mandolines all dolled up with red ribands while three more are dancing a wild Caucasian dance and Alexander Werth is standing on the other side shouting "Slava" to every institution and individual he can think of in all the Russias, and Marjorie Shaw waves her scarf and David Tutayev his hat and the car is hopelessly bogged down amid a milling mob. It is 2 o'clock in the afternoon and it looks as though we shall be stuck here for the rest of the day.

"Come down off that car," shout a score of voices. They want to throw me up in the air in the old Slav style. The Dean of Canterbury took a bow from the balcony of the National Hotel from which Trotsky once made a historic speech but when he ventured down to the street the crowd seized upon him and threw him into the air.

Any one who appears in Allied uniform is liable to fly through the air with the greatest of ease without benefit of blanket and some land heavy, some land light, but every one roars with laughter because there hasn't been such a day of uninhibited joy as this since the revolution. By now the Red Duster is the centre of such a huge throng that when Mrs. Churchill drives out of the Kremlin after lunching with Schvernik nobody notices who it is. I am shaking hands with both hands at once and people are giving me more cigarettes than any one man could smoke, and the crowd is shaking hands with itself with arms outstretched over the head like a victorious boxer, which they seem to think is the English salute. Our driver is worried about his car. It was built as a battle wagon but under the weight of so many children and stalwart Red Army men standing on the running-boards and pressing against the sides, it really feels as though it might collapse. Relief comes

with the appearance of some white-gloved militia mounted on white horses and their efforts to make a lane for us are suddenly aided by the discovery of a Polish general nearby. People rush toward him, I see his dapper figure fly into the air, eyeglass and all, and this diversion enables the car to move forward.

A crowd gathers outside the American Embassy and cheers until the Minister, Mr. Kennan, comes out and makes a speech. A crowd of students walks a mile over the river to the British Embassy and sets up a cheer there, but none of the staff is in. Later on a second crowd appears from the opposite direction, with a Russian general at its head, and joins the throng at the gates. Richard Hare of the Ministry of Information is the only senior official at hand and he saves the situation by going on to the balcony and making a speech in fluent Russian, to which individuals in the crowd respond with snatches of English.

We drive to the Gorky Park of Culture where a Hampstead Heath kind of holiday is going on—a scenic railway, a parachute tower, community singing being led from a stage by two girls who hold up choruses painted on canvas, volleyball games, dartboards and Aunt Sallies. Along the ring of boulevards the searchlights which once defended Moscow against the Luftwaffe are stationed every hundred yards. Their crews are busy painting the lenses red and purple and orange for the last great salute by 2000 guns that is coming with the dark. In every square a band is mounted on a truck and citizens are dancing around it under the bright, cold sky. When the lights come on the concert halls turn out into the street; the orchestras and singers perform on the pavements. A well-known actor walks around town in a top hat and tails, to the general amaze. I see the famous ballerina Marina Semyonova dancing at a street corner. All the reputed formality, even coldness, of the Russians towards their allies disappears—and the whole day is one long spontaneous revel; there is none of the usual Moscow organisation behind it. Every one is out to please himself, and the militia just move off the streets and take the day off.

There was no standing outside the Kremlin in the expectation that Stalin would appear, like some national Totem. But the Red Square was jammed with an immense throng watching the illuminations. Adam Watson, uninhibited secretary of our embassy, attracted an enormous throng in Sverdlovsk Square when he appeared waving a Union Jack in one hand and the red flag in

the other. As night fell the concourse in the centre of the city had reached dangerous proportions. You had to let yourself be carried by the crowd; it was impossible to walk from one chosen point to another. Then as the last and greatest salute was fired a huge silken banner appeared floating in the sky, picked out by searchlights, suspended by barrage balloons. Another white silken flag fluttered a thousand feet up with Stalin's features upon it. Then came squadrons of aircraft flying in low over the city, shooting off streams of rockets and fireworks which filled the sky. It was a firmament gone mad with shooting stars: a most lovely sight.

Next morning they struck a Victory Medal, to be worn by every member of the Russian armed forces. It was inscribed: "For Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945," and on the reverse, Stalin's head and the words he used in the depths of the crisis in 1941, put now in the historic tense: "Our cause was just: we triumphed."

Slowly, on the second day of national holiday, the realisation began to sink in that at last the long dark night was over. The mood was more sober. We began to wonder when the final casualty list would be issued, and what it would be. To say that the Red Army and Red Fleet had lost 8,000,000 killed and missing in the war against Germany would certainly be an under-estimate. The actual figure was probably nearer to 10,000,000. Millions more were wounded and millions driven away into Germany.

The number of civilians killed in this most terrible of all wars in Russian history may never be known.

CONCLUSION

ON VICTORY DAY in Moscow Mrs. Winston Churchill, echoing the sentiments which her husband had often reiterated, said to me: "Unless the friendship established in war between the U.S.S.R. and the English-speaking peoples continues and deepens in peace, there will be very little happiness for the world."

And she added: "I don't mean just the short span of lives we here have to complete but for our children and grandchildren, in generations to come."

We can all agree with that, especially when we narrow the issue down to friendship between the U.S.S.R. and Britain, whose citizens will have to live and work together in Europe long after the American soldiers have gone home. But, writing in Moscow in the middle of 1945, with the long agony of the struggle against Hitler behind us, this writer must confess to very profound misgivings and fears for the future. Were I an American, those fears would be even more marked, for the divergences and contradictions between the American and the Soviet ways of life seem to me much more pronounced than between the British and the Soviet way. But between ourselves and the Russians, the path ahead seems difficult enough—even when we take into consideration the undoubted will to unity which exists in England. As an English Tory M.P. put it in Moscow a couple of months earlier: "The British people are determined to get along with Russia. They think they can succeed in so doing for they know that they *must* succeed."

However, the contradictions between Churchill's England and Stalin's Russia are quite serious enough. Some accommodation between the two will have to be found. For if one were to extend the graphs of national habit and practice indefinitely in the direction in which they are pointing to-day, they would strike one against the other and from this friction would spring a dangerous fire.

Although my own politics are far to the Left I am not one of those who find my country always in the wrong. The Soviet

Union will have to show an accommodating spirit, as well as ourselves. All the concessions ought not to be made on our side. Yet it does seem to me incontrovertible that a majority of the concessions needed will have to come from us. Not merely because the Soviet Union is now so much stronger than we are—as Churchill has conceded, she is the strongest power in Europe (and, one might add, potentially the strongest power in the world)—but because economically the Soviet Union has built her house upon rock and need only continue building on the same lines to be assured of an indefinite accretion of strength and security. It is this solid economic foundation which makes possible the diplomatic and political victories which Russia habitually scores with an ease which looks like sleight-of-hand to the bewildered or irritated politicians of other countries.

Our economic house, on the other hand, rests upon the sandy soil left over from the erosion of our great Imperial position in the nineteenth century. Our house is hopelessly rickety. But we have not yet decided whether to shore it up and try to go on living in the old way or to strike out afresh and build ourselves a new dwelling on a new foundation. The Russians do not have to ask themselves: "How are we going to live after the war?" They know exactly how they are going to live. They have abolished the tyranny of Money and they know they will have no unemployment. The only land values in Russia are sentimental values. No one could dream of pulling down the Kremlin. But the whole "West End" of Moscow could be torn down and turned into a park or factory area to-morrow, if that were in the public interest, without a penny being spent on compensating landlords.

It is never a question of "Can we afford it?" But merely of a decision, granted that so much skilled labour and so much machinery and raw materials are available, as to the order of priority in which goods and services should be produced. During two world wars, when for a brief period Money was overthrown in England too, we knew what it was to be in something of the same position, to experience the satisfaction of producing more in our fields and factories than our country had ever produced before. But in our society full production and full employment have hitherto been achieved only in war. The fact that Russia is the only country in the world which can be certain of achieving this in peace also gives her a material and political advantage among the nations which is so great that it is understood by working men and women in all

lands, even if it still eludes the great brains of orthodox economists. Here, too, lies the attraction which the Soviet Union exercises upon the sympathies of the common people all over the world. It is not "Bolshevik propaganda," for two years in Russia have taught me how incredibly inefficient these people are in presenting their best features to the world. It is just economic fact, which sooner or later penetrates all walls and breaks down all prejudices. It is useless for the champions of Capitalism to bemoan the "unrealistic day dreams" of the masses about Russia. The only way to dissipate such dreams is to make Capitalism afford the same satisfactions to the Western masses as the Soviet system does to the Russian masses. On the day when that miracle is encompassed, the mesmeric world influence of the Soviet Union would begin to decline.

Those who foresee trouble from "Communist propaganda" are assuredly wasting their time. This war has put the seal on the triumph of Stalin's policy of "Socialism in One Country." Confident that it is Socialism which has made Russia so strong, the Russian leaders can scarcely find it in their national interest to persuade other nations to adopt Socialism also. Would they not rather have us weak? We shall be easier to deal with. On the other hand, long-term peace is certainly easier to envisage when the leading nations are not governed under conflicting systems of society which only exacerbate the natural differences which may always be expected to arise between them so long as men are men. The Russians, incidentally, do not anticipate a peace of centuries after this war. They would, I think, be well satisfied with fifty years of quiet. The basic contradictions between the Planned and the unplanned Society have only been sharpened in this war; these contradictions are certainly as profound as those which led to the Crusades or to the long struggle in Europe between the Protestant philosophy and the political and ideological dominion of the Papacy.

Hence it may be selfish national interest, but nevertheless it is probably prudent, for the Russians no longer to seek to persuade us that their system is the better, but rather suffer us to stew in our own juice while they press on to draw the rewards of their pioneering labours. If we are finally persuaded to take the same path as Russia it will be through the power of their example, not through the influence of their propaganda. But of course the force of example will be very strong. Every schoolboy knows how strong was the influence of the French Revolution upon English domestic

affairs. How much stronger would it have been if the liberating force of the Revolution had not so soon degenerated into autocratic militarism? The influence which, by the mere fact of its continued existence, Soviet society cannot help but exert upon England could fade too if, in the post-war years, a harsh foreign policy were to develop or if the civil liberties implicit in the Stalin Constitution were never implemented. Though Soviet diplomacy is often rough, experience in Russia has convinced me that its aims are incontrovertibly pacific: it would take an enormous amount of provocation ever to drag the Soviet Union into another war. As to civil liberties, the issue here is more questionable. The comparison which comes ever to my mind is that between modern Russia and Cromwellian England. Those who class Cromwell among the dictators would certainly declare that Stalin was a dictator. Although the ideological background was vastly different (Cromwell, of course, being a man of the Right while the Levellers were the forerunners of our contemporary Marxists) the strong hold of the Parliamentary leaders upon our Commonwealth is roughly comparable to the control of the Communist Party over modern Russia. Like Cromwell, Stalin is an absolutely unique figure who will leave no successor. The succession of Lenin by Stalin is a phenomenon without precedent in history. Had Lenin been followed by a man of paltry genius the socialist-industrial revolution would almost certainly not have been pushed through, and, in that event, Russia would have been defeated by Germany. As it was, even Stalin's inflexible will and constant goading of his compatriots to greater efforts barely completed the industrialisation of Russia in time. Had Hitler struck at Russia two years earlier, he might have been successful. From the first Stalin knew that it was a race against time—"we must catch up with the advanced countries in ten years: either we do this, or they will crush us."

And in this phenomenal race Russian liberties had to be curtailed, just as our liberties were curtailed in England in the war against Hitler. What happened in Russia, in practice, was that the liberties the Russians never had at any time enjoyed but which *were* promised under the Constitution were in part withheld. They are still withheld, And we are entitled to ask: will they ever be fully granted?

The most conspicuous absentee is Habeas Corpus. This has never existed in Russia. The Constitution provides "inviolability

of person, except by due process of law." But we should consider this due "process" decidedly onerous. You cannot be arrested without a warrant. But once the warrant has been served you can be detained without trial indefinitely, although a criminal charge will always be brought before the courts eventually.

The criminal code compares very favourably with our own. If I had committed a murder, I would rather be tried for it in Russia than in England not only because the death penalty is hardly ever applied but also because the punishment is not imprisonment, in our sense, and does not deprive a man of all hope. A murderer will be set to work in a convict settlement, usually in the north or east: he will work out of doors and if he works well he will receive a better ration scale and may earn a remission of sentence. He will live in a house more like a military barracks than a prison. The "gangs of convicts" which have shocked some of our sailors around Archangel do not shock me for if I were a desperate criminal I would rather do heavy work in the open than languish in a cell as a "lifer." But a political offence is another matter. Owing to the character of the régime it is difficult to visualise a political offence in Russia which is not a serious offence, which does not verge upon treason or counter-revolutionary activity. Mere grumbling does not, as is sometimes thought abroad, lead to serious trouble because any one in his local Party organisation can ventilate grievances or injustices and the People's Courts absorb a good deal of the litigious instincts of the masses—constantly concerned, as they are, with disputes about the occupation of "living-space." But detention on a political charge almost invariably involves the imputation of conspiracy against the Socialist State, which is why sentences of 10 years "in the East" are often given in such cases. People who "go East" frequently come back to their old haunts some years later and resume their old life, almost as though nothing had happened. The list of those who have been charged as "enemies of the people" and later liberated is certainly a long one.

During the war, sentences were more savage, because with the Nazis deep on the country, it was felt that no chances could be taken. The N.K.V.D. believes that the ties of love cannot be ignored in such cases and accordingly the wives or mistresses of "enemies of the people" were almost always sent into exile in a safe place in the East also, although it might be admitted that no charge could be preferred against them. I know personally a

woman, married to a man of Italian origin, who had long been regarded as a rather dubious character; she was detained in Moscow and sent out to Siberia for a period originally fixed at 5 years—though her family have since been told that she may be allowed back earlier. Her husband was sentenced to 10 years for traitorous activities. She herself was permitted to live with her sister in Siberia and to teach in a school there. She was not permitted to leave the town. The primary objective, of course, was to prevent contact between any of her husband's old associates and to avoid any possibility of her meeting enemy agents.

This hard system may be justifiable in wartime but what one misses here is any provision for independent judicial review. By all means have a Home Security force: but make it answerable to the public courts. Her family could not go before a court and say: "We want the body of this woman." They *could* communicate with her, but only through the N.K.V.D. themselves.

This harshness is partly the legacy of Russian history. After all, the present rulers of Russia nearly all spent years in political exile under the Czar. And partly the result of the operation of an inefficient police system. The Russian police are, by our standards, extremely inefficient. Where the net is leaky, it must be thrown all the wider. Of course the vast size of the country militates against efficiency.

Two old myths have been utterly destroyed for me in Russia—the myth of the all-knowing Russian police and the myth of the subtle and cunning "Soviet Propagandist." Neither need give Scotland Yard or the Conservative Central Office a moment's worry. . . .

I do not think the Russians, in the brief 25 years since their emancipation from Czarist Autocracy, have yet acquired the instincts of personal self-assertion which are the product of hundreds of years of Anglo-American development. On the other hand, they are very jealous of their rights: if a Russian does not get his due in rations or living quarters, he will raise the roof. And they are far from being a police-dominated people. In Moscow the Militia are treated with contumely: nearly everybody "argues back" with a policeman. They will not submit to being "pushed around." But the anarchic tendencies of Americans or Australians are entirely lacking in Russians. This is because the advance towards Freedom in Russia has followed a diametrically opposite pattern. Instead of the "checks and balances" of the American

Constitution, drawn up in an agrarian epoch when no vast inter-State monopolies existed and when a strong central government was synonymous with tyranny, progress throughout Russian history has been achieved precisely by a strong central government, working against the disruptive tyranny of petty princes and boyars. Ivan the Terrible is rightly regarded as a progressive ruler in Soviet Russia because he fought for national unity against boyars who found it more profitable to divide, and rule themselves. The emancipation of the Serfs was forced through by an Imperial Autocrat, against the opposition of sectional interests. Therefore the modern Russian does not react against strong central authority; and inasmuch as the Constitution gives a very wide local autonomy to the member republics of the Union, and even to regional soviets and city councils, strong hands are certainly needed at the centre to ensure that the whole fabric does not work loose.

After the death of Lenin there was far more democratic agitation and debate within the Party than exists to-day. This was because the Stalin-Trotsky struggle had not yet been fought out. To-day, with the economic and political "line" clarified, at least for our generation, such an aura of greatness has spread around the name of Stalin that few would venture to oppose a course which Stalin was known to have approved. While still alive, Stalin has acquired a prestige which can only be compared with that of George Washington, and just as it would be a most unusual senator or congressman who would speak against the Father of the Republic to-day, so few Russians would dream of questioning a policy Stalin had endorsed.* Washington did not possess this infallibility in his lifetime. Stalin *does* possess it. That is all that can be said. From this it follows that while Stalin lives we are most unlikely to witness a reversal to what we in the West would consider full, democratic controversy. Nor is there the least prospect of the N.K.V.D. police being abolished. The Russians do not regard the danger of espionage or "wrecking" inspired by foreign agents as having passed into limbo with the defeat of Hitler. And although many injustices have been committed by the N.K.V.D. in the past, you do not find a strong public resentment. On the contrary, I know a woman who spent three years in Siberia during the big Purge. The prosecutor who sent her there himself turned out to

*At the same time Stalin endorses nothing without careful consultation. I know that often in talks with foreign ambassadors he will withhold an answer on some specific point, declaring, "I must consult my colleagues on that."

be a *provocateur*, who had striven to disrupt the state by sending innocent people to Siberia. My friend was released with many apologies and restored to full citizenship. Her comment to-day is: "It was a very interesting human experience." My comment upon such an experience would be unprintable. But Russians just do not seem to react to such things in the same way as we would. Tested and toughened by this dreadful period, this woman's loyalty to her country is now, if anything, firmer than it was before.

Again, the ordinary peasant or worker knows that the revolution has brought him such great benefits that he is inclined to forgive an excess of zeal against those who might undo the work of the revolution. To visualise a comparable situation with us one would have to suppose that we in England had, after incredible exertions, thrown off a Fascist dictatorship: would we then suffer political action directed towards the re-establishment of Fascism with any degree of tolerance? Maybe, even then, we would be less severe than the Russians: but then we are fortunate in not having behind us their dark heritage of centuries-old political oppression. Considering the tremendous scope of the Stalin Revolution—quite apart from the Lenin Revolution which laid the foundation for it—and considering the speed with which it had to be carried through, I think the Russians have made very striking progress towards political democracy. And with the defeat of Fascism we may hope that this progress will be accelerated. As for economic democracy, I believe they are far ahead of the Western World.

Some people object to the monolithic quality of the Soviet state—to the lack of new blood, to the fact that the same people seem to continue in high office, year after year. To my mind this is due to that conservative quality in the working class which one notices in England and America also. Soviet society is organised in a fashion very similar to Anglo-Saxon trade union life. Trade union leadership in the West seems to be immortal—men like Sir Walter Citrine, Ernest Bevin, William Green and so on go on year after year, apparently irremovable. Industrial commissars in Russia, on the other hand, have a pretty sharp turn-over: if they fail to keep up with the plan, they are remorselessly fired.

My friend Maurice Hindus is fond of observing that to ensure the future security of the world it is necessary for England to become Socialist. But the Russians to-day are not counting upon any such thing—though they believe that we shall encounter continual domestic difficulties until we do so. But these, they

know, are not their affair. They concede that "democracy" exists in England though they do not agree that our definition of it has a universal application.

"One cannot speak of one unchangeable democracy for all times and for all peoples," wrote *War and the Working Class* on April 15, 1945. "As is the case with every phenomenon in social life, democracy develops and goes forward. Present-day democracy bears little resemblance to the democracy, say, of ancient Athens; and the present political system of Great Britain differs very much from the system which existed in that country in Cromwell's time. It would be quite hopeless to demand that democracy should be built up in all countries of Europe on the British or American model."

Then comes the key sentence: "It must not be forgotten that English democratic rights are enjoyed only by the inhabitants of the metropolitan country whereas the far more numerous inhabitants of the British colonies are still vainly waiting for the democratisation, the freedom and independence of their countries."

There is the rub. There is the reason for looking to the future of Anglo-Soviet relations with weighty misgiving. If we were a little country like Sweden the Russians would have no right to concern themselves in our future. If we in the British Isles persisted in perpetuating our Monarchy, our House of Lords, our monopoly capital, our undemocratic educational system, our boom-and-slump economy and our "free" labour market with its essential corollary of unemployment, the Russians would smile, but would not criticise, for they know it is not their business. But we are not just a little Sweden. And the business of the British Empire is the world's business. It is precisely in Imperial affairs that we are in danger of running into trouble with Russia—in the sphere in which we are most vulnerable and where the example of Russia is the most powerful. It is not the slightest good to point to the "backwardness" of the U.S.S.R. The Russian Marxists have taken full responsibility for the Czar's Empire and are developing it along lines which are a direct and absolute challenge to every Colonial power in the world. If England had been physically linked with India and if a British Socialist government had decided to share our patrimony equally with the Hindu Untouchables and the poor Moslem farmers you would have some conception of what actually happened when the Bolsheviks under Stalin proclaimed full economic and political equality between the Russian people and

their former Asiatic subject races. The standards of European Russia—never high, to begin with—were deliberately diluted so as to spread the leaven over the whole land. Of course Moscow and Leningrad and the Ukraine suffered thereby—imagine how it would have been if London and the Home Counties had had to share their economic and political heritage with Bengal. The sacrifice of European Russia was immense but the result was to fuse 190 million people of many races and languages into the strongest and most egalitarian union the world has ever seen. We English have a wonderful gift for ignoring awkward problems. But if we brush this one aside we shall be storing up trouble for ourselves beside which the war against Hitler will seem a mere bagatelle. Already, at the San Francisco Conference the Russians have asked for a share in the supervision of colonial areas.

The fundamental human rights of an Asiatic Russian to-day are infinitely superior to those of a South African negro or the subject of an Indian Prince. Yet we like to include these subjugated millions in the ranks of the free when we talk of our "Commonwealth and Empire." This is sheer English hypocrisy which deceives no one but ourselves. So long as the economic and political status of the Indian masses is lower than that of Asiatic Russia—as it certainly is—we have no right to carp about the lack of *our* kind of democracy in Russia. And it is sheer impertinence for us to talk about the sinister powers of the N.K.V.D. or the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

If it were merely our material strength which was now inferior to Russia's we might be complacent yet—*Might is not Right*, and so on. But our moral position—the inner bastion of our Liberal outlook since the days of Wilberforce—is inferior too. When Gandhi was a young man in London he believed that in the slow fullness of time the vast subject majorities under British rule would advance to freedom and that our Empire would become at last what it claimed to be, a voluntary union of free peoples. But Gandhi long since gave up that belief. And now the Tartar, the Uzbek, the Buriat-Mongol, the Kazakh, the Turkmen, and others who were so backward they did not even possess a written language, have reached full equality with the European Russian and rule themselves through administrators and teachers of their own race. Seventy millions in our Empire may be described as "democrats" but for the other 430 millions this transformation in Soviet Asia is the real Russian Revolution. And nothing that we can do will

prevent the knowledge of it gaining ground among the coloured peoples of the world.

Granted that the Bolsheviks were not faced with so vast a problem as confronts us in the 360 millions of India, they have nevertheless solved their own colonial problem and have laid down principles for the emancipation of subject races which are capable of indefinite expansion and application in other parts of the world.

The British Empire to which Mr. Churchill refers with such satisfaction, as though it were the finest political instrument mankind had ever devised, will not long withstand the challenging example of Soviet Asia. And if British Capital unites with its more powerful American partner in an effort to freeze the status quo among the subject peoples in the interest of continued exploitation along traditional capitalist lines (provided always that Mr. Henry Luce and his friends will cut the poor British relation in on their "American Century"), then the stage will be ready and set for World War 3. But that would be an awkward war to fight. There would be many "non-interventionists" including—one is tempted to predict—the best elements in England and the United States themselves.

What is really essential for mutual tolerance, if not complete harmony, between England and the Soviet Union? More economic democracy in England; and more political democracy in Russia. As between the British islands and the British Dominions on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other, that seems a goal that need not be beyond the reach of all of us.

But when we come to our huge, unintegrated, sprawling, backward Empire the effort that would be needed to bring it up to the minimum level needed to ensure a moderately harmonious relationship with Russia seems so vast that one is driven to the depressing conclusion that it may be beyond our strength. Do our people begin to have a glimmering of what such an effort would entail? Do they realise how great is the need? Do they even care?

I want to pack my bag again for England. I want to go home, and find out.

MOSCOW, *Midsummer*, 1945.

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